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Evaluating Presidential Leadership

Fundamental Board Responsibility

Assessing the effectiveness of the president is a fundamental responsibility of the governing board.

It is a part of board accountability. Under Oregon law, the Board of Trustees is charged with the supervision of the President.

The Board should have a policy to implement this fundamental responsibility.

Effective Governing Boards*

Chief Executive

- Select a chief executive to lead the institution.
- Support and periodically assess the performance of the chief executive and establish and review the executive's compensation.

*From "Effective Governing Boards: A Guide for Members of Governing Boards of Public Colleges, Universities and Systems." AGB, 2010

High-Performing Boards

- Engaged and informed – understand and respect differences between governing and managing.
- Support presidential leadership – build a partnership around distinct roles of board and president.
- Balance oversight and advocacy – serve as ambassadors of the university and public higher education while ensuring institutional accountability.

Evaluation of Presidential Leadership

Two Types of Assessment

Annual

Comprehensive

Basic purposes are the same. The procedures are complementary. Periodic comprehensive assessment builds on the annual process.

Principles of Presidential Evaluation

1. Criteria for assessment should reflect dimensions of leadership that the board and president believe are most relevant in advancing the university.
2. Evaluation should be based on goals, expectations and metrics that have been jointly agreed to by the board and the president.
3. In evaluating presidential effectiveness, the board is implementing its responsibilities and fiduciary duties of active oversight.

Multiple Purposes

1. Contributes to developing the president's effectiveness and the institution's success.
2. Deepens the relationship between the board and the president; builds the partnership.
3. Expands the board's knowledge of the presidency.
4. Provides a way to monitor the institution's progress in meeting strategic goals.
5. Fulfills the requirements for institutional accreditation.

Annual Evaluation of Presidential Leadership

- Enables president to improve and strengthen performance.
- Provides an opportunity to re-set mutually agreed-upon goals.
- Informs annual decisions on compensation.

Comprehensive Evaluation of Presidential Leadership

- Increases knowledge about the work of the president from diverse sources, deepens understanding on complexity of the presidency.
- Provides way to monitor the university's progress in achieving strategic goals.
- Synthesizes significant institutional documents and improves on-going strategic discussion.
- Serves as a test for emerging strategic goals and future priorities.
- Strengthens president and board leadership.

Annual and Comprehensive Reviews

Period Covered	1 year	4-5 years
Responsibility	Chair or Committee	Special review committee with trustees and president
Participants	Trustees and president	Trustees, president, outside consultant, faculty, staff, students and other selected constituents
Time to Complete	1 month	2-4 months
Criteria/Evidence	Self-assessment statement, goals from previous year, input from selected trustees	Self-assessment statement, all previous reviews, extensive examination of documents, and interview data from trustees and other constituents regarding the president's performance, institutional priorities and governance
Goals	Monitor performance against mutually agreed-upon goals, set or re-set goals for the year ahead, strengthen president-board communication, inform decisions on compensation adjustments	Examine presidential performance on multiple leadership dimensions, obtain feedback from key constituents on institutional priorities and effectiveness of the president's leadership, reaffirm the partnership between the board and the president, and consider consultant's recommendations for improving presidential and board performance
Cost	None to modest	Consultant's fees, staffing

Prepared by AGB consultant Ellen Chaffee; modified from "Annual Presidential Performance Reviews" by Merrill Schwartz, AGB, 2001.

Characteristics of an Annual Evaluation of the President

- Driven by policy and agreed-upon processes.
- Based on president's self-assessment.
- Review of goals for prior year and discussions of goals for next year.
- Robust discussion of results.
- Appropriate confidentiality.

Characteristics of a Comprehensive Evaluation of the President

- Assesses quality of “board-president” relationship and reveals levels of communication and mutual support.
- Provides for major areas to be assessed and includes evaluations from participants about importance of topics.
- Provides flexibility to gain information about key focus areas as well as emerging topics.
- Synthesis of information can be supplemented by qualitative and quantitative information.
- Includes introspection (self-assessment) and accountability.
- Requires candor and confidentiality.
- A best practice—not a response to a problem.

Leadership Themes Assessed

- Strategic leadership; visioning
- Educational/academic leadership
- Management
- Financial leadership
- Fund-raising
- External relations
- Board relations and governance
- Personal characteristics and values
- Summary Opportunities: Major accomplishments; most important advice, priorities going forward

Policy Development: Open, Transparent, Inclusive

Who participated? 43 individuals were interviewed

Trustees

Executive team and other senior administrators

Faculty Senate Executive Committee

Members of Administrative Council

Members of ASOIT

Members of the Foundation Board

Stakeholder's Views

- The context matters. This has been a year of great change and transition.
- Stakeholders are seeking clarity about the role of the president and about OIT's vision and strategic directions.
- Stakeholders understand the fundamental board responsibility for conducting an annual evaluation.
- There is strong interest in a periodic comprehensive review, but there are different perspectives about the value of a comprehensive review at this time.

Stakeholder's Views

- Regarding a comprehensive review, stakeholders see the value but have different views about timing.
- Stakeholders did not have an opportunity for input when the assessment was conducted by the system and now have an opportunity with this board.
- The majority of stakeholders believe this is not the appropriate time to conduct a comprehensive review because it is still a time of transition.
- Some expressed the hope that they could have some input (“maybe a 180 rather than a 360”).

Stakeholder's Views

What should be assessed?

LEADERSHIP

COMMUNICATION

MANAGEMENT

FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Stakeholder's Views

LEADERSHIP—examples of expectations:

Develop and promote a clear vision for the future—use an inclusive process—include measureable goals.

Be inspirational.

Set the tone at the top about what matters.

Be sure the board has the full picture—the pros and cons.

Be a “unifier” between the two campuses which have different cultures and financial models.

Focus on student success.

Stakeholder's Views

COMMUNICATION—examples of expectations:

Articulate the vision with passion and enthusiasm.

Explain links between strategy, academic plans, facilities, etc.

Be visible and accessible; build relationships every day.

Project openness and honesty—communication is not pr.

Create a culture of trust—“When there is no trust, you can never be transparent enough.”

Be a good listener--look for ways to encourage genuine dialogue.

Be connected to the community.

Stakeholder's Views

MANAGEMENT—examples of expectations:

In addition to developing strategic directions, the president has to implement plans/actions to execute on strategies.

Develop a team and invest in their success.

Be clear about expectations—what are we empowered to do?

Hold people accountable to achieve their goals.

Be decisive. Move forward on commitments.

Be visible and accessible—be a “hands-on” manager.

Stakeholder's Views

FINANCIAL STRATEGY—examples of expectations:

Build a strong financial position for the institution.

Adjust resources to deliver on the vision.

Take responsibility for financial position (cannot blame state).

Be clear about managing the deficit (what are we investing in? How are we controlling costs?).

Focus on affordability and enrollment growth.

Be the chief fundraiser.

Stakeholder's Views

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS—examples of expectations:

Integrity

Work ethic

Good listener

Embrace diversity and inclusion

Knows how to influence

Has a collaborative, inclusive and transparent style

Personal commitment to the institution

Priorities for time—how you spend your time signals what is important

Policy on Evaluating Presidential Effectiveness

1. Reflects perspectives from the stakeholders as well as best practices in higher education.
2. Includes an annual process and cycle of assessing and re-establishing goals.
3. Assures that the full Board is engaged in the process.
4. Sets forth values and principles and reflects the expectation that there is a partnership between the Board and the President.
5. Specifies an Annual Evaluation and a periodic Comprehensive Evaluation.

Resources

“Assessing Presidential Effectiveness: A Guide for College and University Boards” by Richard L. Morrill, AGB Press, 2010.

AGB National Conference on Trusteeship, April 17-19, 2016, Gaylord National Harbor Resort and Convention Center, Washington, D.C.

AGB Institute for Board Leaders and Executives of Public Universities and Colleges, June 13-15, 2016, Lansdowne Resort, Leesburg, VA.