North Dakota University System

Board Retreat
June 30-31, 2014

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Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
How to Have a Mediocre Board

• Under-engaged/Over-engaged
• Avoid discomfort
• Have the chancellor frame the agendas
• Have the chair try to be president or chan.
• Avoid focusing on the work of the board; focus only on the work of the system
• Have the board’s executive committee make all the decisions
How to Have a Mediocre Board

• Use meeting time the same way every time
• Have personal agendas
• Focus on the past
• Believe academic quality is only a faculty issue
• Don’t evaluate the chancellor or provide constructive feedback
• Avoid risk
• Allow one board member to dominate, disrupt
• Get the chancellor to police board misbehavior
What Effective Governing Boards Do

1. Ensure the mission of the system and the institutions is current (and aligned with public purposes)

2. Select the chancellor

3. Work with and assess the chancellor and comp.

4. Approve the strategic plan and monitor progress

5. Ensure fiscal integrity and preserve system assets
What Effective Governing Boards Do

6. Ensure the academic quality of the system institutions and their academic programs

7. Protect institutional autonomy, academic freedom and the public purposes of higher education

8. Ensure policies and processes are current and implemented properly
What Effective Governing Boards Do

9. Engage relevant constituencies appropriately with the administration
10. Be transparent and ethical
11. Assess own performance
12. Focus on strategy
Hallmarks of Highly Effective Boards

1. Actively engaged in governance work
2. High level of trust and candor
3. Engage multiple perspectives
4. Concentrate on governance, not management
5. Focus on strategic issues that matter
6. Emphasize system perspective, not personal agendas
Hallmarks of Highly Effective Boards

7. Listens to constituents but without veto
8. Enhances and nurtures the legacy of the system
9. Recognizes its responsibility to students to provide a quality education
10. Balances advocacy and oversight
11. Commits to due process and academic freedom
12. Commits to adequate time and energy to do the board’s work
Hallmarks of Highly Effective Boards

13. Balances system and institutional needs and welfare with the state’s needs and priorities

14. Imposes the highest ethical standards

15. Speaks with one voice

16. Commits itself and the system to due process and academic freedom
Hallmarks of Highly Effective Boards

17. Assess system and institutional leadership and the board’s performance for continuous improvement

18. Participate and enjoy the experience
BOARD PERFORMANCE

- Board and institutional performance are closely related.
  - Boards have major impact-positive or negative

- Reputation Counts in Higher Education
  - Donors
  - Recruiting Faculty & Best Students
  - State Funding
BOARD PERFORMANCE

- Boards have reputations of their own mostly based on how they conduct board business and themselves
  - Internal constituencies
  - External constituencies
- Board meetings should be models of good governance #
Essential Responsibilities of Boards

1. Boards have ultimate fiduciary responsibility

2. Boards are responsible for the recruitment, compensation, and performance review of the Chancellor of the system.

3. The board defines the educational mission of each institution, determines the academic programs each institution shall offer, and is accountable for the quality.
Essential Responsibilities of Boards

4. Boards are overseers of the public trust they hold, and must be accountable.

5. Boards are responsible for ensuring independence of the system and the institutions and for safeguarding academic freedom.
Essential Responsibilities of Boards

6. Boards define the terms of shared governance through respect for traditions including delegation of recommendations for academic policy to faculty.

7. Boards are responsible for financial decisions.
Essential Responsibilities of Boards

8. Boards are responsible for reaching out to multiple constituencies

9. Boards need to understand the legal and regulatory environment within which their system operates.

10. Boards must conduct the board’s business in an exemplary fashion. #
Responsibilities of Individual University Trustees

1. To seek to be fully informed.

2. To support the mission of the university.

3. To speak one’s mind at board meetings but support decisions made.

4. To understand the trustee’s role as policymaking and not management. (Results Not Process)
Responsibilities of Individual University Trustees

5. To strengthen and sustain the chancellor while asking probing questions and exercising critical judgment.

6. To communicate promptly to the chancellor and board chair any significant concern or complaint and then let the chancellor handle it.
RESPONSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUAL TRUSTEES

7. To defend the autonomy and independence of the system’s institutions.

8. To maintain an overriding loyalty to the system and not to a constituency.
RESPONSIBILITIES OF
INDIVIDUAL UNIVERSITY TRUSTEES

9. To maintain a decent respect for the opinions of my fellow board members and a proper restraint in my criticism of the system.

10. To not allow end runs realizing it destroys TRUST.
Responsibilities of Individual University Trustees

11. To recognize that only the chancellor is the spokesperson for the system and the board chair is the only spokesperson for the board.

12. To foster openness and trust among Board members, the administration, faculty staff, students, state government and the public.
Responsibilities of Individual University Trustees

13. To remember the system and its institutions were created to help the state and its citizens.

14. To recognize that no board member shall make any request or demand any action that violates the written policies, rules or regulations of the board or the university.
RESPONSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUAL UNIVERSITY TRUSTEES

15. To maintain the highest ethical standards and to never allow any conflict of interest.

16. To not rush to judgment and to give everyone the benefit of the doubt.
HOW TO BE A GREAT BOARD MEMBER
Great Trustee (cont’d)

• Be Engaged
• Keep Learning
• Know Your Colleagues
• Keep Students First
• Avoid the Shoelace Syndrome
• Make Meetings a Teaching Moment
• Remember, the Body Corporate
Great Trustee (cont’d)

- Learn the Board Culture
- Respect Your Fellow Board Members and Earn Their Respect and Trust
- Remember Policy Not Management
- Think Strategically
- Advocate as Well as Oversee
- Remember, You Are Always a Board Member
Great Trustee (cont’d)

• Support Your CEO

• Remember Institutions are Fragile, Watch What You Say and How You Say It

• Read and be prepared

• Have Fun and Enjoy#
• COMMITMENTS
COMMITMENTS

• Commit to the Public Trust
• Seek First to Understand
• Attend and Engage
• Confidential
• No Conflict of Interest
• Objective and Fair
• No Personal Comments
COMMITMENTS (cont.)

• Respect Final Decision
• Chair and President as Spokespersons
• Build Strong Relationships
• Seek Views of Others and Accept Criticism
• Trust Other Board Members and Be Worthy of Their Trust