

# The Board's Role in Presidential Assessment, Support, and Accountability

Massachusetts Board of Higher Education  
Trustees Conference  
October 27, 2016  
Lowell, MA

# Presenter



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# Agenda

- Why Assessment Matters
- Boards and Presidents
- The Massachusetts Context
- Annual Assessment Process
- Periodic Comprehensive Assessment
- Discussion and Q & A

# Why Assessment Matters

**Good practice**—set goals and assess progress, enhance performance, improve board/president relationship

**State law**—requires assessment annually and comprehensively every 3 or 5 years; inform compensation

**Institutional accreditation**—NEASC standard 3.10: *The board appoints and periodically reviews the performance of the chief executive officer...*

# Why Assessment Matters: Boards and Presidents

- Trustees as fiduciaries—act collectively, independent of appointing authority (no Lone Rangers)
- Select, support, *and* assess
- Accountability—transparency, communication, agreed upon goals
- Board chair/president relationship key—but chair and board must act together
- Regular communication, not once a year

# Why Assessment Matters: The Academic Presidency

“The president acts within an institutional context which is determined by the attitude of the **faculty**, the behavior of the **student** body, the presence or absence of **collective bargaining**, the influence of **alumni**, **legislators** and **self-interest groups**, the degree of control by the central office in a **statewide system**, and most critically the extent of authority and responsibility of the **governing board**. An adequate appraisal of the president’s role must take into account the attitudes, prerogatives and behavior of these groups.”

John Nason

# Why Assessment Matters: Challenges of Collegiate Evaluations

- Metrics of performance: no single bottom line
  - operational and strategic indicators
- Complex role of the governing board
- Distance, diverse fields, board conflict and back channels
- Supporting and critiquing the president
- Social media

# The Massachusetts Context

- Open meeting laws—7 exceptions; presidential assessment is not one
- Institutional and system/state goals
- Institutional board and MBHE roles
- Fiscal realities for compensation

# The Massachusetts Context: Annual Goal Setting

- Institutional mission, goals, and objectives, including strategic plan
- Interrelationship of institutional goals with system-level goals
- Institutional leadership and management (fiscal, planning, decision-making and problem solving, personal attributes, fundraising, internal relationship/campus climate, external relationships/ leadership in community

# Annual Assessment Process: Board Processes, Criteria and Metrics

## Board assessment committee

- executive committee, officers or ad hoc committee
- role of the board chair

## The board's goals and expectations

- goals and expectations defined on appointment or in subsequent evaluations
- state goals and priorities
- strategic and operational goals and indicators: effective metrics and benchmarks
- special issues and opportunities

# Annual Assessment Process: Presidential Self-Assessment

## Retrospective

- progress on prior initiatives and goals using metrics and benchmarks
- processes and relationships

## Prospective

- revising and projecting strategic and operational goals
- developing new initiatives
- describing organizational and personal challenges
- opportunities for personal development and organizational changes

# Annual Assessment Process: Board Review and Feedback

## Assessment Committee Review

- President's self-assessment
- feedback from other board members
- feedback from other sources
- questionnaires and surveys: not typical in annual reviews

## Review with the President

- board chair and chair of the committee meet promptly with the president to provide feedback
- documented oral and/or written review focusing on the future

# Annual Assessment Process: Board and Commissioner Roles

- Board discussion, documentation and recommendation on compensation adjustment
- Report on institutional goals and objectives and system-level goals and objectives
- Commissioner reviews and decides

# Periodic Comprehensive Assessment

## Purposes

- systematic feedback
- leadership development
- reflect on the evolution of a presidency

## Periodic

- every 3 to 5 years
- builds on annual reviews
- input on future of the institution
- planned event; avoid crises and public controversies

# Periodic Comprehensive Assessment: Multi-Source or 360 Reviews

## Protocols

- board assessment committee, including president
- staff support
- notify participants about their roles and the purposes of the review

## Typical participants

- governing board, senior staff, representatives of faculty, students, staff, alumni, local leaders and officials

# Periodic Comprehensive Assessment: Steps

- board member(s) or external consultant(s)
- President's self-assessment
- individuals and/or small groups of 50+ total participants
- confidential but not anonymous
- interview questions and questionnaires: aspects of leadership
- document the process; send follow-up communications
- plans for leadership development and improved organizational effectiveness

# Resources:

## Leadership Development

- Coaching and mentoring
- Leadership seminars
- Reorganizing decision-making processes and positions
- Personal renewal—writing, professional travel, sabbatical

# Resources

## Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Trustee Resources

- <http://www.mass.edu/foradmin/trustees/home.asp>
- <http://www.mass.edu/foradmin/trustees/preseval.asp>

## AGB

- Mschwartz@agb.org
- [www.agb.org](http://www.agb.org)

AGGB

Questions?

## Discussion (if time allows)

What's working and what's not in annual and comprehensive presidential assessment at your institution?

Take 10 minutes to discuss:

- What improvements have been made, what are pitfalls to avoid, what practices do you recommend?
- What questions remain?

Each group provides a three-minute summary of best practices and those to avoid.

# Cautions:

## Issues and Special Situations

- Risk Management: political, financial, and reputational risks off-campus with media, governors, legislators, and alumni, and on campus with unions, faculty, staff, and students
- Divisions within the board
- Votes of no confidence
- Others?