

# 2018 Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Trustees Conference



MASSACHUSETTS  
Department of  
Higher Education

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

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**AGB** ASSOCIATION OF  
GOVERNING BOARDS  
OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

# Presenters

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# Agenda

- Why Assessment Matters
- Boards and Presidents
- The Massachusetts Context
- Annual Assessment
- 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...*

# Boards and Presidents

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

# 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

# Challenges Assessing Leadership in the Academic Presidency

- Metrics of performance: no single bottom line, operational and strategic indicators, qualitative and quantitative data, many constituencies
- Like steering a battleship
- Complex role of governing board, supporting *and* evaluating the president
- Trustees at a distance, from diverse fields; board conflicts and back channels
- Social media, 24/7 job

# 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

# MBHE Annual Presidential Evaluation: Outline of Report

- Executive Summary
- Process used
- Review of institutional goals
- Review of system-level goals
- Recommendation for compensation adjustment
- Attachments (goals, self-assessment, data, metrics, etc.)

<http://www.mass.edu/foradmin/trustees/documents/AnnualPresidentialEvaluationOutline.pdf>

# Annual Assessment Process

## Assessment Committee Review

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

## Review with 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

# Areas and Criteria for Assessment

What areas do you focus on in assessing presidential performance?

What does your board use for criteria for assessment of performance?

# Periodic Comprehensive Assessment

## Multi-Source or 360 Reviews

### Purposes

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

### Periodic

- every 3 to 5 years
- complex circumstances
- avoid crises and public controversies

# Periodic Comprehensive Assessment

## Protocols for Multi-Source or 360 Reviews

- 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

## Multi-Source or 360 Reviews with Interviews

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

# Leadership Development

- Coaching and mentoring: conflict resolution and team building, giving apologies and making commitments
- Leadership seminars and peer discussions, some at national meetings
- Re-organizing decision-making processes and positions
- Personal renewal: writing and professional travel

# Process Issues and Special Situations

- Risk Management: political, financial, reputational and other risks, off-campus with media, governor, legislators, and alumni, and on campus with unions, faculty, staff, and students
- Divisions within the board
- Dealing with votes of no confidence
- Other topics

# Resources

Massachusetts Department of Higher Education,  
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Online Trustee Resources

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

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

- Compensation and Evaluation Guidelines and Procedures
- Annual Presidential Evaluation Outline

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