The Board’s Role in Presidential Assessment, Support, and Accountability

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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
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?