

The Young Guardians

Students as Stewards of the Past, Present, and Future of American Higher Education

A Field Guide for Student Board Members

Sarah K. Elfreth

Cooper Anderson, Editor

Matt Strauch, Editor

Associated Students of Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

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A Field Guide for Student Board Members

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*To the past, present, and future student trustees
and to all those who support, mentor, and inspire them.*

*Special thanks to the students of the Associated Students of Colorado
State University, particularly Matt Strauch and Cooper Anderson,
for editing, funding, and making this publication a reality.*

Forward

To quote a popular Billy Joel song, “For all our mutual experience, our separate conclusions are the same.” This lyric stayed with me throughout the process of researching and writing this book. It occurred to me every time I interviewed another student trustee and thought to myself how similarly, oftentimes word for word, I would relate my own experiences. Transforming those interviews into this book was an uplifting and personal experience. The passion and conviction student trustees expressed for public service validated my own zeal for the role. It confirmed that I was not alone in my commitment to improve shared governance and education policy, even if it meant facing nerve-racking decisions, successes and defeats, and the occasional sleepless night. It substantiated my decision to dedicate my college career to something greater and more important than myself: the future of higher education in this country.

What started as a senior honors thesis that fulfilled a graduation requirement has matured into something much more. My work and relationships with student trustees nationwide has led me to advise and contribute research to such student trustee issues as compensation, experiential learning programs, and voting rights in a number of states. Completing this work for publication – interviewing more student trustees, expanding on ideas, and reflecting on my own experience – kept me involved in and passionate about student trusteeship past graduation and well into my graduate work. I can only hope that its ultimate purpose, to assist student trustees in finding their own voice, comes to fruition and validates another young person’s commitment to this important feat.

Part I • The Lay Board

Chapter 1

The Student and the Lay Board

Academic boards of trustees have and will continue to face challenges as the demand for and structure of U.S. higher education evolves. Acting dually as stewards of the institution and as representatives of the public interest, academic governing boards are responsible for honoring the past, staying accountable to the present, and ensuring the future. The concept of the lay board of trustees, or a group of dedicated citizens independent of the academic institution, is unique to American and Canadian higher education. Accepting the legal and fiduciary responsibility of an institution, these boards have helped make both private and public higher education flourish since the first lay board was established by Harvard in 1636.¹ As higher education has evolved, so has its lay boards. Once occupied solely by wealthy, white, elderly men, today's board includes greater numbers of females, people of color, and, perhaps most contrary to the early American boards, students.

Today, the majority of public higher education policy making boards, whether the Board of Trustees, Board of Regents, or Board of Governors, now include at least one student member. Serving on any public board is one of the most prestigious and challenging responsibilities any person can undertake, regardless of age or experience. The challenge increases when the board's task is to direct a public institution and the constraints therein, and is required to respond to the pressures of the governor's office, the legislature, as well as the demands of the business community and the taxpayers. The degree of difficulty is even greater

1 Ingram, Richard T and Associates. *Governing Public Colleges and Universities: a Handbook for Trustees, Chief Executives, and Other Campus Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 3.

when boards are responsible for a system of multiple colleges and universities serving multiple missions, populations, and interests. These public system boards can average one trustee for every 10,000 students, with some boards like the State University of New York and the California State University System averaging one trustee for every 18,000 and 27,000 students, respectively.² Finally, the greatest challenge is perhaps faced by the student board member. At the average age of 23, these students are placed amidst a board of millionaires, former legislators, and successful businesspeople, and are expected both to conform and to stand out. Sixty-five young people across the nation sit in this unique position, charged with the same daunting responsibility as the rest of the board: to act as guardians of higher education, invested legally and morally with the public trust, for the state they call home.

The student trustee walks a blurred line between board member and student representative. Their roles are ambiguous; there are no steadfast parameters, no clear rules by which to abide. Much has been written about boards of trustees in general – their makeup, history, and effectiveness – yet little has been written about the individual trustee. Even less, save the passing mention of recommending against including students, is written about the role, challenges, and effectiveness of the student member. Yet, based on the testimony of the majority of students trustees interviewed, public system boards generally hold their student members in high regard and treat them as equal and full members. If this is the case and the literature on the average board member can be universally applied, then “there are enough challenges, ambiguities, contradictions, and ironies in academic trusteeship without [adding] confusion about the basic roles of board and trustee.”³ The ambiguity of the student’s basic role, compounded by the pressures of serving a public system and, to some degree or another, representing the very constituency most affected by the board’s actions, leaves the student member oftentimes flying blind.

Although they have proven capable of the responsibilities of boards time and again, student members often suffer identity crises and frustration when tackling their unique role. They face the added challenges of time constraints as they juggle

2 Carothers, Robert L. “Maintaining Sound Relations with System Campuses.” *Governing Public Colleges and Universities*. Ed. Richard T. Ingram (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993), 211. Statham, Russel. Phone interview. California State University. 5 April 2010. Mercedes, Melody. Phone interview. State University of New York. 12 May 2010.

3 Ingram, 94.

full course loads. They are presented with a relatively short terms (the overwhelming majority serve for only one or two years compared to the five or six of their peers) with which to learn their role and govern effectively. They are asked to balance the often unfamiliar business pressures of higher education as well as the corporate nature of the boardroom. While many boards respect their participation, in some cases student trustees face skepticism from fellow board members, university presidents, and chancellors. In addition, they must mitigate the pressure from students to perform in a strictly delegate capacity. Like many of their fellow board members, they too are “not usually prepared for what is likely to be one of the most exhilarating, exasperating, rewarding, worrisome, and educational experiences of their life,”⁴ and yet have less experience and a significantly shorter period in which to adjust to the demands.

Much of the literature exploring academic trusteeship agrees that, in both the legal and practical sense, the board is the Institution it represents. The stability and effectiveness of the board affects the success of the institution,⁵ and “governing boards are only as effective as their individual members.”⁶ With this in mind, it is imperative that the student member or members, (the University of New Hampshire’s has five student trustees), is made ready for their profound responsibility. In some instances, student members are lucky to have experience in higher education administration, politics, or shared governance prior to serving on the board. If they are very fortunate some may be successfully transitioned by and can rely on their predecessors for guidance. Others may even benefit from the mentorship of an experienced board member or receive an excellent orientation by the system staff. While these resources are helpful, if not guaranteed, many students, like their older peers, feel intimidated by their introduction to their first board meeting or board crisis. As one trustee said, the experience is a lot like parenthood, “one day it just happens, and while you can draw on your experiences to date, nothing in life to that point quite prepares you for this role.”⁷

According to the majority of experts on the subject of academic trusteeship, it takes even the most experienced and sophisticated board members anywhere from one to three years to truly learn the intricacies of the role and effectively serve.

4 Ingram, 93.

5 Ingram, 303.

6 Martorana, S.V. *College Boards of Trustees* (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1963), 47.

7 Chait, Richard P., Thomas P. Holland, and Barbara E. Taylor. *The Effective Board of Trustees* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 8.

Unfortunately for student members, the luxury of a multi-year learning curve simply does not exist. They must learn in months, weeks, and sometimes only days the skills other board members develop over their extended tenures.

As stated above, the literature on academic trusteeship available to help prepare board members patently ignores the more complicated role of a student member. No work exists to address the unique and powerful role of the student trustee. This glaring shortfall was brought to light by my own struggles with my role, identity, and board position, as well as in my work with other student trustees on a national level. It is with the student trustees' challenge in mind that I hope to provide a number of suggestions and findings, a field guide of sorts, with which student trustees can navigate their way through the complex world of board service via their ambiguous role.

Research and Design

This field guide begins with the history of lay academic boards and public systems of American higher education for background. After laying this groundwork, I explore the role, challenges, and responsibilities of the modern board as outlined in the relevant literature on academic trusteeship. These roles include, but are not limited to, hiring campus leadership, setting system policy, and dictating budget allocations and cuts. Next, I provide a current national profile of the student trustee broken down by statistics on age, voting powers, efficacy, and other characteristics. I then briefly describe each public system in the U.S. that includes a student trustee and outline the appointment or election processes, expectations, and cultures of each system from the eyes of their student trustees. Following these profiles I explore the role of the student trustee and provide recommendations on how they can be most effective based on the experiences of the 48 student trustees interviewed for this study. These recommendations range from communication tactics to thoughts on representation to effective board interaction. Next, I provide brief recommendations for how systems can better orient and support student trustees in their specific roles. Finally, I touch upon the mounting importance of the student trustee on the modern American university governing board.

In conducting my research I consulted a number of texts on academic trusteeship, most notably Ingram's *Governing Public Colleges and Universities*, Kerr and Gade's *The Guardians: Boards of Trustees of American Colleges and Universities*, Martorana's *College Boards of Trustees*, Chait's *Improving the Performance of*

Governing Boards and The Effective Board of Trustees, Duderstadt and Womack's *Beyond the Crossroads: The Future of the Public University in America*, Tierney's *Governance and the Public Good*, the Association of Governing Board's *Effective Governing Boards*, as well as a number of relevant peer reviewed articles. The works spanned 1947 to 2010 and, while unique in perspective, all shared a number of common core values of academic trusteeship. These values include group cohesiveness, responsibility, and stewardship. In particular, the following texts were especially helpful and provided clear and relevant reading for any student trustee: Ingram's *Governing Public Colleges and Universities*, Kerr and Gade's *The Guardians*, Martorana's *College Boards of Trustees*, and the Association of Governing Board's *Effective Governing Boards*.

The information for the profiles as well as the majority of the recommendations provided in this field guide are the product of 48 phone interviews with student trustees, regents, governors, supervisors, and board members from 39 boards systems and 28 states. I limited interviews of student trustees to those serving on multi-campus or multi-institutional system boards, or systems with more than one campus and more than one CEO. The interviews consisted of approximately fifty questions and lasted between thirty minutes to an hour and a half each. Collegial, conversational, and anecdotal, the interviews provided a great amount of background information as to the perceptions of various board cultures that is not necessarily included here. Each interview captured the experience of a single student trustee in the spring of 2010. The entirety of the collection, then, is merely a snapshot in time and should be taken as such. What was most striking through the interview process was the similarity in feedback received, from students spanning Rhode Island to Oregon, and how similarly I myself would have answered many of the questions. While not all 65 current student trustees contributed to this study, one from all of the 39 boards lent their perspective.

Although my research is limited to public system boards, my hope is that it provides broad guidelines for those student trustees serving on single public institutions and private boards as well. The recommendations are meant to be taken with a grain of salt and adjusted to meet the unique demands of each system, institution, or board.

Despite this relativism, one recommendation holds universally true to any student member of any board: student trusteeship is what each individual chooses

to make it. A student trustee can be as involved or removed as he or she chooses. To be effective, however, requires tackling the role from both fronts: as a board member *and* a student. With only limited time on the board, student trustees must embrace that “conscientious trusteeship is stimulating and enormously rewarding, but it requires a deep and abiding commitment and a willingness to learn how to exercise trusteeship effectively.”⁸

Considering the prevalence of student trustees on academic governing boards, equipping them with some degree of identity perspective is essential to their success and effectiveness. According to *Governing Public Colleges and Universities*, “from one point of view, much – perhaps too much – is expected of too few by too many. The volunteer trustees and regents of the nation’s diverse and expanding public higher education system are expected to function effectively in one the most complex political, economic, and social environments ever created. They need all the help they can get.”⁹

8 Ingram, 91.

9 Ingram, Xxiv.

Chapter 2

History of Governing Boards and University Systems

The current structure of academic lay boards of trustees today is unique to the U.S. and Canada, though its history can be traced back to the Protestant Reformation and even as far back as medieval Europe.¹⁰ Prior to the Reformation, many mid-fourteenth century Italian and German universities were controlled by students holding administrative roles. In response to “perceived excesses against both the professoriate and the townspeople,” these students were replaced with boards of citizens charged with governing both professors and students.¹¹ During the sixteenth century, the John Calvin’s Academy, founded in Geneva, was the first of the Reformation colleges to embrace the concept of lay governing boards.¹² Citing the need for “moderation and ... mechanisms or social control, as well as a bent toward republicanism,” Calvin established the lay board to consist of representatives chosen by Geneva’s government.¹³ Although Oxford and Cambridge, the colleges generally held as the models for the American university, boasted only internal governing boards, a number of Scottish universities such as Edinburgh adopted Calvin’s lay board model.¹⁴

10 Kerr, Clark. *The Guardians: Boards of Trustees of American Colleges and Universities: What They Do Well and How They Do It* (Washington, D.C.: The Association, 1989), 17.

Ingram, 6.

Martorana, S.V. *College Boards of Trustees* (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1963), 5.

11 Kerr, 17.

12 Ingram, 6.

13 Kerr, 18.

14 Kerr, 18.

It was around this time that the first Protestant immigrants began migrating to the American colonies. Establishing Harvard in 1636, the Puritans (a significant number of whom were Cambridge graduates) faced a daunting challenge: the new colony lacked a professoriate from which to draw an internal board.¹⁵ To combat this and to conform to Calvinist standards, Harvard established a Board of Overseers that consisted of the leading men from the Massachusetts colony. Difficulty in convening a meeting led to Harvard's president establishing dual boards in 1650, one internal board consisting of faculty and one external consisting of lay community leaders. An underperforming internal board led to the tradition of including local ministers on the second, external board, effectively establishing the model for the entirely lay American board. The College of William and Mary, established in 1693, also began with dual boards, one of leading men of Virginia and the other of faculty. Ultimately, William and Mary's most influential external board member, Thomas Jefferson, helped to steer the College towards a single lay board structure. The remaining colonial colleges followed this guide.¹⁶

The emergence of the public college following the American Revolution saw these institutions conform to the structures of their private counterparts. Public boards were often dominated by religious groups and operated in a self-perpetuating manner.¹⁷ Overtime, these public boards moved away from the heavy religious influence and self-perpetuating model.

It was not until the period surrounding World War II that public colleges and universities began out-performing private institutions in enrollment and educating the majority of the country's students.¹⁸ Prior to 1940, nearly 70 percent of public colleges and universities had lay governing boards.¹⁹ It was not until after the war, with the pressures of the G.I. Bill and the approaching affects of the baby boom, that a "massive consolidation of public college governance occurred as states sought to manage the rapid growth."²⁰ This consolidation occurred in a number of ways: some states combined separate regional campuses and smaller systems

15 Kerr, 19.

16 Kerr, 19-21.

17 Ingram, 7.

18 Ingram, 7.

19 Schmidt, Peter. 2001. "Weakening the Grip of Multicampus Boards." (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 23, p. A24).

20 Schmidt.

while other systems evolved from what were once single-campus universities.²¹ By the mid-1970s only about 30 percent of public colleges and universities answered to their lay board. Today, public colleges and universities educate 80 percent of American students and public systems account for two-thirds of all public colleges and exist in 38 states.²²

21 Association of Governing Boards. *Effective Governing Boards* (Washington, D.C.: AGB Press, 2010), 3.

22 Ingram, Xx.
Schmidt.

Chapter 3

The Role of Governing Boards and the Individual Trustee

Although the responsibilities of academic governing boards have experienced significant evolution over the past few centuries, they are “organized, managed, and governed in a manner little different from the far simpler colleges of a century ago.”²³ Even so, the American academic governing board is quite different from that of its corporate and European cousins. The unique characteristics of these boards are that: “1) they are composed of laymen; 2) they are invested with complete power of management, most of which they delegate to professional educators; [and] 3) they operate without the checks and balances typical of our democratic society.”²⁴

Despite their long history, ambiguity surrounding the role, responsibility, and authority of these boards still exists. Before any trustee, student or otherwise, can understand the role he or she will play, he or she must first understand the purpose of the board. Boards are the ultimate authority and the highest policymaking body for the institutions they serve. Broadly, their actions influence the direction and health of higher education in the state and they hold a “legal and fiduciary responsibility to the welfare for the institutions” they serve.²⁵ Unlike higher education elsewhere, the American model of lay trustees “provides for accountability to the public welfare without government domination

23 Duderstradt, James J. *The View from the Helm: Leading the American University During an Era of Change* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 327.

24 Chait, Richard P. *Improving the Performance of Governing Boards* (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1996), 36.

25 Duderstradt, James J. and Farris W. Womack. *Beyond the Crossroads: The Future of the Public University in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 162.

(thus institutional autonomy) and for flexibility in operations (thus dynamic adjustments to changing circumstances).”²⁶ As stewards and temporary guardians of public higher education, board members are entrusted to serve simultaneously the specific interest of the institutions and the broader public interest of the community and state.

Roles and Responsibilities

More specifically, academic boards of trustees are charged with a number of fundamental responsibilities. In his book *The Guardians*, Kerr illustrates what he considers to be the two most important lessons to understand about academic boards. First, trustees must understand that “they are both inside and outside the institution.”²⁷ This means that they are the conduit between the academy and the public. They straddle a fine line and are accountable to every constituency from the faculty to the taxpayers to the governor. Second, Kerr argues that the key to understanding academic boards is “to know what they are not.”²⁸ They are not, for instance, branches of the government. They are not coalitions of faculty or students. They are not and should not, especially in relation to public systems, be involved in every minute detail of an institution. They do not run the daily operations of the institution. In practice, boards relegate the majority of the control of institutions to the academic tradition of shared governance and delegate the “academic matters to the faculty, and the tasks of leading and managing the institution to the administration.”²⁹ Boards vest the responsibility of day-to-day operations in institution administration while they establish broad system policies and are ultimately accountable for the welfare of the institution.

It is the central function of academic boards to ensure:

- The overall and long-run welfare of the individual institution, including its specially chosen missions, and the best of its past and its brightest prospects for the future;
- The autonomy of the institution from outside bureaucratic, economic, and political domination;
- The academic freedom of the members of its community;

26 Kerr, 10.

27 Kerr, 10.

28 Kerr, 10.

29 Duderstadt, *Beyond*, 328.

- The balance of the institution against single-minded demands of internal or external constituencies; and
- The public welfare in general conduct of the institution, including the wise use of its resources and its adherence to high levels of academic behavior – assuring social responsibility and simultaneously protecting institutional autonomy.³⁰

The Association of Governing Boards (AGB), a coalition of and resource for academic governing boards, laid out the responsibilities of boards in its publication *Effective Governing Boards: A Guide for Members of Governing Boards of Public Colleges, Universities, and Systems*. Among these responsibilities are:

- Selecting a chief executive to lead the institution;
- Supporting and periodically assessing the performance of the chief executive and establishing and reviewing the chief executive's compensation;
- Ensuring the institution's fiscal integrity, preserving and protecting its assets for posterity, and engaging in fundraising and philanthropy;
- Ensuring the educational quality of its institution and academic programs;
- Ensuring that institutional policies and processes are current and properly implemented;
- In concert with senior administration, engage regularly with the institution's major constituencies; and
- Conducting the board's business in an exemplary fashion with appropriate transparency, adhering to the highest ethical standards and complying with applicable open-meeting and public record laws; ensuring the currency of the board governance policies and practices; and periodically assessing the performance of the board, its committees, and its members.³¹

Apart from these functions, boards are also charged with ensuring that institutions effectively implement objectives and missions.³² This accountability measure is more widely known as a strategic plan and is essential to both individual institutions and overall systems. Second to perhaps selecting and terminating college and university CEOs, the responsibility commonly cited as most important is the establishment and implementation of the strategic plan; this is central to the

30 Kerr, 12.

31 AGB, 7.

32 Tead, Ordway. "College Trustees." *The Journal of Higher Education*. 22.4 (1951): 171-226, 172.

stewardship mission of the academic board to ensure the success of public higher education. Essential to this success is aligning each institution's strategic plan with that of the system's and the demands of public interest, all the while honoring the traditions of the institution and accounting for its future solvency.

Specific to public boards, maintaining the autonomy of public higher education and of the board itself is paramount. As William Tierney said in *Governance and the Public Good*, "the goal of public governing boards is to oversee institutional policies, to ensure the 'best interests' of the institution, and to serve as mediators between the institution, the state, and the public."³³ Accountability to the public interests requires that a board "govern its institution or system in a fashion that contributes to the state's goals for higher education, which generally include some combination of ensuring broad access to high-quality education and doing so in a manner that contributes to the economic, civic, and social vitality of the state."³⁴ Struggles with the legislature and the governor's office over budgetary issues and academic freedom have become increasingly more frequent as the nature and role of public higher education has come under fire. As the stewards of higher education, boards represent the academy to outside constituencies and are ultimately responsible for its accountability. To perform effectively, boards must maintain a constant balance between internal and external constituencies all while taking into account "the realities of government oversight and institutional accountability."³⁵ Although "the aspirations of the institution with the needs and priorities of the state" are often aligned, boards "must be especially adept at resolving those tensions when goals diverge."³⁶

If boards do not take this role seriously they run the risk of adding to the perception that higher education is a private rather than a public good. The trend of state disinvestment in public higher education is perhaps the most serious challenge facing the academy today as "higher education is frequently the first thing cut and the last thing restored."³⁷ The role of guardian, therefore, is perhaps most essential when balancing these interests of internal and external constituencies. Protecting the academy from legislators who may propose harmful

33 Tierney, William G. *Governance and the Public Good* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 97.

34 Tierney, 97.

35 AGB, 39.

36 AGB, 38.

37 Ingram, 18.

public policy, appeasing taxpayers who demand quality at the lowest price, and maintaining board autonomy is a constant struggle. Yet safeguarding the academy and the board's own authority as policymakers is no easy task. The benefits of a lay board, that of flexibility and adaptability, and the freedom to exercise this flexibility "must stem from a consistent and traditional practice of legislative support without interference."³⁸ The sensitive relationship between board and external constituencies is made even more complicated by a state that cares too much or too little about higher education. With this in mind, boards must remember that "freedom with a limited or grudging legislative support may be as deterring to institutional progress in the long run as greater controls accompanied by willing support."³⁹

The Ideal Trustee

While the roles and responsibilities of boards are generally universal, it is important to note that the history, culture, and political nature of each individual academic board provide for varying experiences. Despite similarities in mission and administration, no two are exactly alike. The level of autonomy of the system board, the degree of independence of the individual institutions, and the dynamic between members vary state to state and board to board.

Just as boards have certain universal roles, the characteristics of the ideal trustee can also be generalized. Among these universal characteristics, which apply to student trustees as well, are commitment, dedication, and conviction. Open-mindedness, the ability to be an effective team member, and love for the institution are also essential traits of an effective trustee.⁴⁰ The AGB suggests qualities of the ideal board member include advocating for the value of the institution specifically and higher education generally.⁴¹ Further, "however diverse the paths that bring board members to the boardroom and however intense may be the differences among their views, board members should speak publicly with a single voice even on the most contentious issues." This is a responsibility "more imperative and more difficult to maintain" than any other.⁴²

38 Martorana, 28.

39 Martorana, 28.

40 Ingram, 12.

41 AGB, 4.

42 AGB, 4.

The three most accurate descriptions of ideal trustees in the literature are as follows:

- “Those who are free from dominance of any partisan group; conversant with the history and ideals of the institution; leaders in their own special fields of activity so that the public has confidence in their ability; able and willing to devote considerable time to their duties; and capable of regarding higher education as a dynamic force in civilization and their trusteeship as a high form of civic service;”⁴³
- “Board members who have an exceptionally high tolerance for ambiguity, a genuine love of higher education and its role in a free society, the strength of deep convictions, respect for the presidency, and values that will hold them, and higher education, in good stead in the face of what is yet to come;”⁴⁴
- “Those who consistently exercise good judgment but are also careful listeners, those who are strong in their convictions but appreciate the value of others, those who seek advice as readily as they give it. They do not shy away from making difficult decisions in the boardroom and taking their share of criticism when necessary.”⁴⁵

Taken individually, each characteristic is dauntingly impressive. Taken together, the intricate role of the trustee and the constant balancing act he or she must play, is overwhelming. The ideal trustee is difficult to find and the effective trustee is difficult to sustain.

Ultimately, it is Thomas Arnold, a British educator and historian, who said it best: “No one out to meddle with the universities who does not know them well and love them.”⁴⁶

Balancing Systems

Governing systems of multi-campus institutions and multiple institutions, which are the concentration of this study, present a number of unique challenges and benefits to public boards. Boards of systems have the added responsibility of “planning for and channeling the growth and overseeing the operation of what

43 Martorana, 38.

44 Ingram, 22.

45 Ingram, 111.

46 Tead, 171.

amounts to several institutions.”⁴⁷ Effectively and efficiently balancing the interests of multiple campuses, institutions, and missions is a challenge for even the most established board. Ultimately, boards responsible for a system “must achieve a working balance between institutional autonomy and system coordination.”⁴⁸

Governing several institutions effectively is complicated further by the range of institutional characteristics in a given system. Missions, demographics, and institutional history can vary widely from campus to campus. For example, the Board of Regents of the University System of Maryland are responsible for three research universities, three Historically Black Institutions, two regional centers, a university serving predominantly nontraditional students in a largely online format, and a number of regional comprehensive universities. Systems such as the University of Wisconsin and the City University of New York govern a mix of four-year institutions and two-year community colleges.⁴⁹ Geographic strains, especially in larger states such as Texas and California can hinder a board member’s understanding of each unique institution and a system’s ability to rapidly respond to issues. As mentioned earlier, the ratio of trustees to students also increases drastically from single-institution boards to system boards. Further, trustees of systems are challenged with balancing favor for individual institutions in a system based on alumni affiliation or regional bias.⁵⁰

Just as there are challenges when governing systems of multi-campus and multiple institutions, there are a number of benefits in the larger breadth systems enjoy. In terms of assuring accountability to external constituencies such as the legislature, a single entity that speaks on behalf of all public colleges from a statewide perspective can help to “insulate institutions from direct political control.”⁵¹ Systems are also better equipped to coordinate educational and community initiatives among institutions, thereby better serving their public interest missions. On a financial note, fundraising, research dollars, and cost savings can all be better achieved through system coordination.

47 Martorana, 19.

48 Carothers, Robert L. “Maintaining Sound Relations with System Campuses.” *Governing Public Colleges and Universities*. Ed. Richard T. Ingram (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993), 217.

49 Wingad, Aaron. Phone interview. University of Wisconsin System. 4 March 2010.
Provost, Cory. Phone interview. City University of New York. 29 April 2010.

50 AGB, 38.

51 Schmidt.
Carothers, 221.

The contradicting public pressures for both greater accountability and cost savings have recently caused a few states to reconsider the system structure. States such as New Jersey and West Virginia have both disbanded public systems in favor of boards for individual institutions.⁵² However, as the most prevalent and efficient structure for public higher education in the U.S. today, systems are here to stay. Boards must learn to balance the interests of individual institutions, the system, and the state. They must rise to the challenge of ensuring “equity among campuses, effective and intelligent coordination of educational objectives, and recognition of diversity and individual institutional pride while fostering creativity and initiative at each campus.”⁵³ It is essential that trustees approach their role from a “systemwide perspective, resisting the temptation to be narrow advocates” for individual campuses.⁵⁴

In successfully ensuring this balance and perspective, the board honors “the mission of the system [that] should ideally represent a whole that transcends the sum of its parts.”⁵⁵

Structures of Boards

The structures of public system boards are strikingly similar state to state. For the most part, boards of public institutions range in size from 9 to 23 members.⁵⁶ The dominant model of selecting trustees for four-year public institutions involves gubernatorial appointment followed by confirmation by the state senate. Although gubernatorial appointment remains the dominant model, for “six boards in four states – Colorado, Michigan, Nebraska, and Nevada – public board members are popularly elected on either statewide or regional basis.”⁵⁷ Two titles for chief executive officers also exist among public boards. The title “chancellor” is common for CEOs of multi-institutional systems, such as in Maryland, while leaders of

52 Schmidt.

53 Gale, Robert L. and Frances Freeman. “Orienting Trustees and Developing the Board.” *Governing Public Colleges and Universities*. Ed. Richard T. Ingram (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993), 307.

54 AGB, 38.

55 AGB, 8.

56 Jeppesen, Melanie. Phone interview. South Dakota Board of Regents. 7 April 2010.
Statham, Russel. Phone interview. California State University. 5 April 2010.

57 AGB, 3.

individual institutions are considered “presidents.”⁵⁸ Conversely, CEOs of multi-campus systems, such as the University of California, are titled “presidents” while leaders of individual campuses are considered “chancellors.”⁵⁹

58 Carothers, 212.

59 Bernal, Jesse. Phone interview. University of California. 5 April 2010.
Carothers, 212.

Part II

Profile of the Student Trustee

According to a number of the works on academic trusteeship, all trustees are more effective when they look to other boards and trustees for guidance and perspective. Learning from each other's experiences can help trustees combat "the lack of a comparable perspective [that] leads board members to erroneous conclusions, such as a sense that the problems their college faces are unique or, conversely, that the problems are avoidable."⁶⁰ Relevant to all trustees but especially to student trustees, communication with other trustees outside of one's own board can be extremely worthwhile.

60 Chait, 96.

Chapter 4

A Picture of the United States

In learning from one another's roles, struggles, and experiences we can better understand our own. As of Spring of 2010, there were 65 student trustees serving on 39 boards in 28 states. Of those, 48 student trustees took part in this study representing systems totaling 373 institutions and 4.59 million students in states ranging from Florida to Iowa to Washington. The following statistics, charts, graphs, and observations are based on the experiences of the student trustees interviewed. The majority of these points will be addressed in greater depth in Part III.

Age

The average age of the student trustees interviewed was 23.2 with a median age of 22. The majority of older student trustees (those in their mid to late twenties) responded that their age gave them an added benefit in their relationships with board members and balancing the roles of student and trustee.

Academic Concentration

The academic concentrations of student trustees varied greatly. Among the more prevalent concentrations were political science (12), medicine or biology (10), business (9), law (5), and finance or economics (5). Many of the student trustees found that they often incorporated knowledge learned in the classroom into the boardroom. The most common coursework tended to be in the areas of political science, marketing, education, and communication.

Undergraduate/Post-Baccalaureate

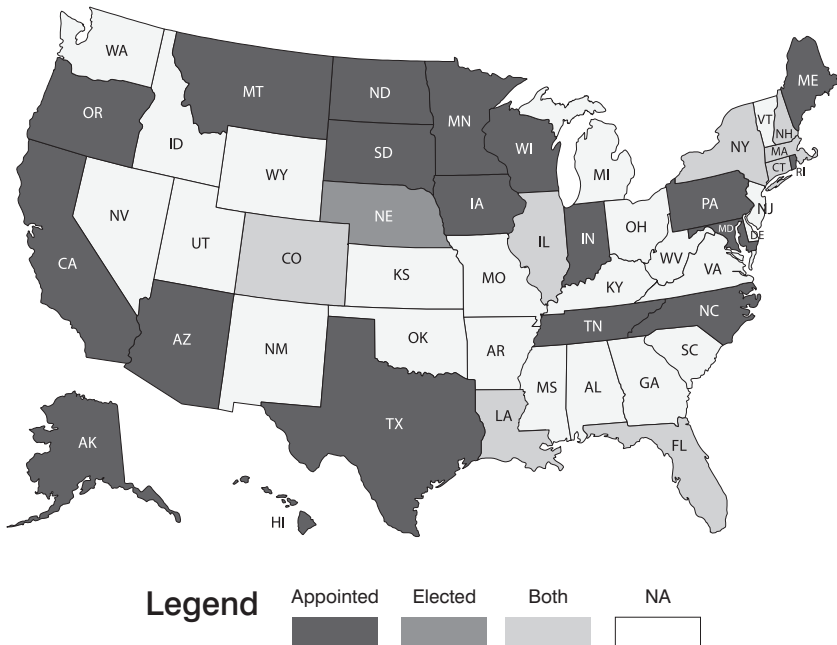
The ratio of undergraduate student trustees versus student trustees pursuing post-baccalaureate degrees serving on boards was nearly two to one. In some cases, such as in a number of boards in Texas and in Tennessee, the position of student trustee rotates between campuses, some of which only enroll graduate and professional students. In other instances, student trustees serve in dual roles as trustee and student body president for an undergraduate student government association, thereby mandating an undergraduate student trustee. Traditionally, the student trustee role is either always held by an undergraduate student or a mix of undergraduate and graduate students, depending on the institution.

Selection Process

The typical selection process for public board members overwhelmingly favors gubernatorial appointment while the selection for the position of student trustee is slightly more varied. Selection by peer election make up only seven of the 39 boards with sitting students; gubernatorial appointments still dominate with 32 of 39 boards. Of the 32 student trustees appointed by the governor, the vast majority included some sort of student input or vetting process in their selection. Some systems employ a mix of both student election and gubernatorial appointment, such as in Tennessee, where candidates for student trustee are peer elected and then a gubernatorial appointment is made from that elected pool. In Illinois, where only one of the three student trustees has the power to vote, student trustees are peer elected but the voting member is chosen by the governor. On those boards where students were peer elected nearly half, or 47 percent, served in a dual role as student trustee and student body president of their individual institution (Pennsylvania) or chair of the statewide student association (SUNY and CUNY). The remaining peer elected student trustees ran in elections similar to those held for student government.

Figure 1 depicts the selection process across the United States. The states in white have either no system or no student trustee. Nebraska is the only state with two systems that appoints one student trustee and elects another.

Figure 1
Student Trustee Selection Process – Elected v. Appointed



Term

Of the 39 boards included in this study 27 (56 percent) of the student trustee positions served one year terms while 21 (44 percent) served two year terms. The student trustee for the Board of Regents for the State of Iowa was the only outlier, serving a term that lasted until graduation. Of those 20 student positions serving two year terms, four of them served as a non-voting member in their first year and a voting member in their second. This structure is commonly known as a student trustee-designate model. The student trustees serving in this capacity are generally privy to the same information as full board members and the voting student trustee.

Whether it consists of one or two years, the student trustee term is generally (59 percent of the time) consistent with the fiscal year (July-July). The outliers who adhered to a varied schedule include CUNY, SUNY, and the University of Nebraska System. Terms spanning the fiscal year have the potential to place those student trustees who graduate in May in the precarious situation of serving on the board after they officially leave the university. According to the majority of those interviewed, this time discrepancy is a minor detail that does not affect their role.

One significant variation is the University of Massachusetts (UM) Board of Trustees policy for student trustees to legally step down from their role once they graduate in May, yet the new student trustees do not take office until July 1st. On the typical year this is not a controversial issue; however, the UM Board of Trustees voted on tuition increases in June 2010 (a variation from their typical voting schedule), thereby leaving no student to vote on the motion.

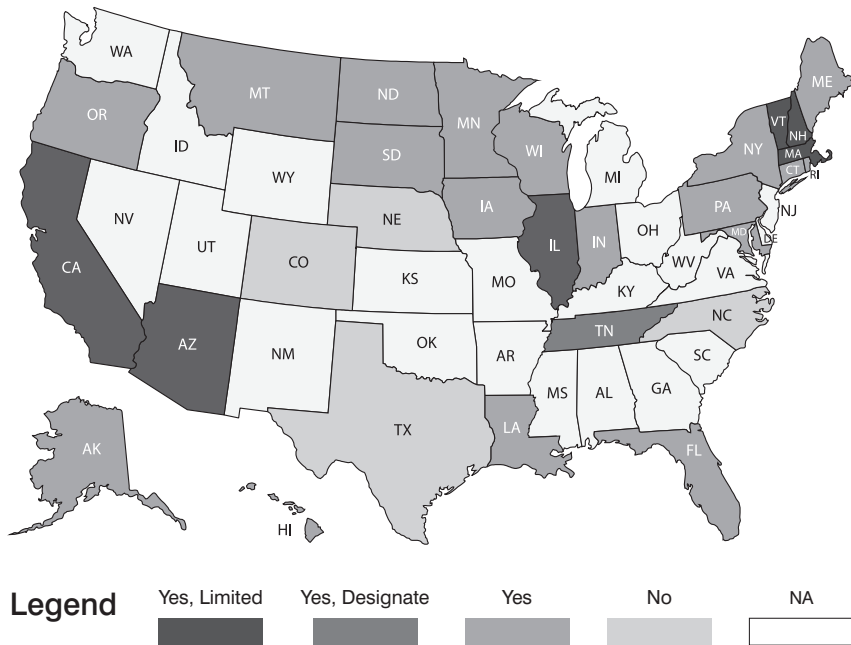
Voting Powers

The majority (74 percent) of the boards in this study included one or more students trustees with full voting powers and executive session privileges. The two student trustees from the University of Nebraska and Nebraska State College System enjoy opinion voting privileges in which their votes are measured first, taken into consideration by the rest of the board, but not recorded. Forty-seven percent of the student trustees who do not enjoy voting privileges wish they had the ability to vote. Two of these students, both from the Colorado State System, cited that a bill to grant student trustee voting rights has been introduced into the Colorado General Assembly for multiple years but has consistently failed to pass one or both houses of the state legislature.

Again, four boards in three states exercise student trustee-designate models in which the student trustee serves as a nonvoting member for the first year of a two year term. The majority of student trustee-designates cited the importance of having the first year as a learning year. Some boards, such as those serving the UM and the University of New Hampshire System (UNH), allow for student trustees to vote on a rotational basis based on institution. The UNH System, for example, allows two of its five student trustees to vote.

Figure 2 depicts student trustee voting powers across the nation. States in white delineate those as having no system or student trustee. Those in the lightest gray depict those states in which student trustees cannot vote, while those in the next shade represent those that allow voting. The next-to-darkest shade depicts states with boards that have a student trustee-designate, and those in the darkest shade depict those states with boards that allow a limited number of their student trustees voting powers.

Figure 2
Student Trustee Voting Powers



Representation

New student trustees are faced with the plugging question of whether to base decisions off the delegate or trustee model of representation. Student trustees may choose to interpret their role in a purely representative capacity (the delegate model) or in the capacity of a trustee balancing the interests of all constituencies involved and voting or acting on judgment (the trustee model).⁶¹ Of the 44 students interviewed, 36 percent answered that they executed their role in the delegate model of representation while 64 reported that they used the trustee model. This compelling question will be further explored later in this work.

Multi-Student Trustees

Fifteen boards have multiple student trustees, including the four boards (the University of California, the California State University, the Arizona Board of Regents, and the University of Tennessee System) with one full student trustee

61 Burke, Edmund. "To the Electors of Bristol, On Being Elected a Representative in Parliament for that City: 1774." *Orations and Essays* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1900), 63.

and one student trustee-designate. The majority of these boards, predominantly clustered in the New England region, are structured so that each student trustee represents a single campus within a system. A few other boards, such as the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, have one student trustee to represent traditional students and another to represent non-traditional students (24 or older).

Balance

When asked to measure the difficulty of balancing their role as a board member with their role as a student on a five point scale, student trustees responded with an average 2.9 and median 3 difficulty. Only six students answered that they experienced zero difficulty while seven responded that they experienced a 4.5 or higher level of difficulty. The most common reasons cited for the difficulty experienced included amount of school work, the strains of travel, and overall difficulty in balancing work and leisure time.

Time Dedicated

Student trustees were asked to measure the time they dedicated to their role as a board member, including board meetings, travel, student engagement, and office work on the average week. Many students had significant difficulty in measuring this time because of the irregularity of board and committee meetings (often one week every one or two months). Thus, student trustees answered that they dedicated an average of significantly less hours a week on an “off week” (a week with no official board commitments) and significantly more hours on a busy week. Some students responded that they consistently dedicated 30 to 40 hours a week to their role. Several stated that they wished they had more time to dedicate to the board but felt their academic commitments made greater dedication difficult.

Background

One hundred percent of student trustee interviewed were involved in extracurricular activities before serving on the board. Most commonly, student trustees had backgrounds in student government or statewide student associations (81 percent), experience lobbying or interning on the state or federal level (42 percent), Greek life (15 percent), or had served or are serving as student body president for their institution (13 percent).

Tuition

Despite the current difficult fiscal climate and state disinvestment, governing boards are under more pressure than ever to raise revenue. This study also examined whether student trustees would vote or speak in favor of a tuition increase. An overwhelming 87 percent responded that they would vote to increase tuition, the majority of which qualifying that they would only do so in order to maintain the quality of the system. The student trustees who responded that they would not vote for a tuition increase cited a number of reasons, including serving as the student representative and unable to vote, believing higher education should be free, or representing the lone vote on the matter as the basis their decision. Every student trustee who responded that they would not support a tuition increase also responded that they acted in a delegate capacity and were representing the voice of the students.

Chapter 5

Systems at a Glance

Current Systems and Their Student Trustees

Although much of the role, process for selection, and experience of student trustee vary greatly from board to board, there are two standards consistent for nearly every board. These standards include the common yet rarely utilized freedom of the governor to disregard recommendations in making an appointment and soliciting a second round of applicants for the position (this was the case of Arizona's 2009-2011 student regent).⁶² While compensation for service varies greatly among systems and boards, it is also a universal standard for student trustees to be reimbursed for the travel expenses they incur in their capacity as board members. Apart from these standards, each system and board presents a different experience for its student trustees.

State	System	# of Student Trustees	Process of Selection	Length of Term	Voting Privileges
Alaska	University of Alaska Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting
Arizona	Arizona Board of Regents	Two - Designate	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting
California	California State University Board of Governors	Two - Designate	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting

62 Ginthe, Jennifer. Phone interview. Arizona Board of Regents. 8 April 2010.

	University of California Board of Regents	Two - Designate	Appointed by Board	Two Years	Voting
Colorado	Colorado State University System Board of Governors	Two	Elected	One Year	Non-Voting
Connecticut	Connecticut State University System Board of Trustees	Four	Elected	Two Years	Voting
Florida	State University System of Florida Board of	One	Elected	One Year	Voting
Hawaii	University of Hawaii System Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting
Illinois	University of Illinois Board of Trustees	Three	Elected	One Year	One of Three Voting
Indiana	Indiana University Board of Trustees	One	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Yes
Iowa	Board of Regents State of Iowa	One	Appointed by Governor	No official term	Voting
Louisiana	Louisiana State University System Board of Supervisors	One	Elected	One Year	Voting
	University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors	One	Elected	One Year	Voting
	Southern University System	One	Elected	One Year	Voting
Maine	University of Maine System Board of Trustees	One	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting
Maryland	University System of Maryland Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Voting

Massachusetts	University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees	Five	Elected	One Year	Two of Five Voting
Minnesota	Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees	Two	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting
Montana	Montana University System Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Voting
Nebraska	Nebraska State College System Board of Trustees	Three	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Non-Voting
	University of Nebraska System Board of Regents	Four	Elected	One Year	Non-Voting
New Hampshire	University System of New Hampshire Board of Trustees	Five	Elected	One Year	Two of Five Voting
New York	City University of New York Board of Trustees	One	Elected	One Year	Voting
	State University of New York Board of Regents	One	Elected	One Year	Voting
North Carolina	University of North Carolina System Board of Governors	One	Elected	One Year	Non-Voting
North Dakota	North Dakota University System State Board of Higher Education	One	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Voting
Oregon	Oregon University System Board of Directors	Two	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Board of Governors	Three	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Voting

Rhode Island	Rhode Island Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting
South Dakota	South Dakota Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting
Tennessee	University of Tennessee System Board of Trustees	Two - Designate	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting
Texas	University of Texas System Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Non-Voting
	Texas A&M University System Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Non-Voting
	Texas State University System Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Non-Voting
	Texas Tech University System Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Non-Voting
	University of Houston System Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Non-Voting
	University of North Texas System Board of Regents	One	Appointed by Governor	One Year	Non-Voting
Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin Board of Regents	Two	Appointed by Governor	Two Years	Voting

Alaska

The University of Alaska System Board Of Regents has one voting student member who serves a two-year term based on the fiscal year. Serving three main academic units and 35,000 students, the student regent is selected through a process that involves both student election and gubernatorial appointment. The governor chooses from a pool of undergraduate candidates who stood for election on each of the three main campuses. Like other Board members, the student regent receives a per diem stipend for each day he or she works for the Board.

Arizona

Two student regents serve on the Arizona Board of Regents for two-year terms beginning in the fiscal year. Utilizing the tiered student regent-designate model, one student regent serves as a non-voting member in their first year while the other, entering their second year, serves as a voting member. Serving three institutions and 130,000 students, student regents are selected on a rotating basis in which two institutions are represented while the third is occupied with the selection process of the student regent-designate for the following year. Typically, the student governments at each institution alerts students to the open position and solicit applications. Next, the student government interviews the candidates and narrows the pool to five applicants. The statewide student association, consisting of representation from each of the three institutions, then interviews candidates and narrows the pool to three. These three names are then forwarded to the governor who selects one for appointment. Student regents vary between undergraduate and graduate students and receive no compensation for their role on the Board.

California

University of California

The University of California (UC) Board of Regents has two student regents, one voting and one non-voting student regent-designate, who serve two-year terms based on the fiscal year. Candidacy is open to all students within the system and begins with an application process at each institution. A council of student body presidents interviews the candidates and narrows the pool to twenty students. Next, the system-wide student association interviews candidates, narrows the pool down the three students; those names are sent to a special committee of the Board. The special committee, which includes the current student regent and the governor, interviews the candidates a final time and sends its recommendation to the full board for final approval.

While there has traditionally been a mix of undergraduate and graduate students serving on the Board, graduate students have been heavily favored in the past decade. The current student regent designate, Jesse Cheng, is the first undergraduate to serve in nine years. The UC Board of Regents is responsible for 10 campuses, five hospitals, and three national labs and includes 250,000 students. While not a requirement of the position, student regents typically take on what is affectionately referred to as a “legacy project,” or an issue they feel passionately

about and choose to address during their term. Student regents receive tuition remission for both years they serve on the Board and receive reimbursements for travel, but only to and from an official Board meeting. This can present a significant problem for student regents who wish to travel informally to visit campuses or meet with students.

California State University

The California State University (CSU) is one of the largest systems in the country serving 23 institutions and 450,000 students. Similar to the UC Board, two students sit on the CSU System Board of Governors and act in the same student governor-designate model. To select the new student governor each campus solicits applications and forwards candidates to an internal review board of the system-wide student association. The internal review board, which includes the current student governor and student body presidents from each CSU campuses, then narrows the candidate pool to approximately ten and interviews those students. This board then recommends three to five names to the governor's office which in turn interviews the candidates and selects a student to sit on the Board. While terms typically span the fiscal year, the process has been stalled in recent years causing the student governor to not be appointed until November or even February of a fiscal year. As with the rest of the Board, the student governors receive a \$100 per diem stipend for each full day they serve in an official Board capacity. Because of the two-year term, student governors are typically graduate students or begin their term as undergraduates and leave as graduate students.

Colorado

Two student governors sit on the Colorado State System Board of Governors and serve one-year terms based on the fiscal year. Elected at-large by undergraduate students, the student governors serve dually as members of the Board and as undergraduate student body presidents of their home institutions. As mentioned previously, although student governors cannot vote, a bill submitted to the Colorado state legislature granting voting rights has been defeated each year proposed and has not received support from the rest of the Board. The Board serves two institutions and approximately 31,000 students. Student governors are compensated for their role as student body presidents but not for their service on the Board.

Connecticut

The Connecticut State University System Board of Trustees includes four voting student members who serve two-year terms beginning in June. A student trustee is selected in at-large elections by students at each of the four institutions representing a collective 36,000 students. Elections occur in a staggered manner every two years so that two new student trustees are supported by two “seasoned” student trustees. Because student trustees represent 4 out of 18 members of the Board (the highest percentage of any system), their presence make a considerable impact. Student trustees are always undergraduate students and do not receive compensation for serving on the Board.

Florida

One student governor serves on the State University System of Florida Board of Governors. The student governor serves a one-year term spanning May to May, has full voting power, and represents 300,000 students. He or she is first elected as student body president at one of the 11 institutions and serves in a leadership role with the Florida Student Association. These 11 students then vote among themselves to select the student governor. Although there is no standard, student governors are traditionally graduate students. The student governor does not receive compensation for their work on the Board, but they do receive a stipend for serving as president of their institution’s Student Government Association. The Florida Student Association also provides the student governor with staff support.

Hawaii

Representing 10 campuses, four research centers, and approximately 58,000 students, the University of Hawaii System Board of Regents includes one voting student regent serving a two-year term based on the fiscal year. Prior to 2006, the governor could select any one in the state to serve as the student regent or traditional regent on the Board. Since then, a resolution to establish a seven member selection committee was passed. The Regents Candidate Advisory Council is charged with reviewing candidates and making recommendations to the governor. The student regent tends to be a graduate student and does not receive compensation for serving on the Board.

Illinois

Serving three institutions and 74,000 students, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees includes three student trustees who serve one-year terms based on the fiscal year. Only one of the three student trustees has the power to vote. These trustees are elected by students at their home campuses to serve on the Board. Based on a personal statement written by each candidate, the governor then selects which student trustee receives full voting power. Because the designation is at the discretion of the governor and not based on rotation, the 2009-2010 student trustees agreed prior to the selection that the voting student trustee would vote strictly on a consensus basis with the remaining two student trustees. This means that if the two non-voting student trustees were for or against a measure and the voting trustee disagreed he would still be obligated to vote in accordance with the majority.

Although no student trustee is compensated for their role on the Board, the student trustee from the Chicago campus has a discretionary fund of \$14,000 paid for by the campus with which to implement student trustee initiatives. Though traditionally undergraduate students, student trustees can be either undergraduate or graduate students.

Indiana

The Indiana University Board of Trustees has one voting student trustee that serves a two-year term congruent with the fiscal year. A committee of 10 student leaders representing institutions from across the system is formed in order to select a new student trustee. The committee typically receives and reviews up to 40 applications and narrows the selection to 10 students. These names are then sent to the governor, who further narrows the candidate pool to three. The governor and his or her staff then interview the candidates and select a student trustee. Like the other trustees on this board, the student trustee receives a \$50 per diem stipend for every day they serve in an official Board capacity. The Board is responsible for 9 institutions and 100,000 students. Student trustees have traditionally been a mix of undergraduates and graduate students.

Iowa

One student regent sits on the Board of Regents for the State of Iowa. As a voting member of the Board, the student regent has no official term. Instead, a student is eligible to sit on the Board in good standing for as long as the student

wishes, or until a year after he or she has graduated. Serving three institutions and 70,000 students, the selection of the student regent position rotates between the three institutions. The beginning of the term is based on when the previous student regent decides to step down from the role. Candidates are interviewed at the institution level and then by the governor's office. As with the rest of the Board, the selection of the student regent is based on maintaining a balance of party affiliation, gender, and geographic location among its members. The student regent is typically an undergraduate student and is compensated \$50 per day he performs in the Board capacity.

Louisiana

Louisiana State University System

The Louisiana State University System Board of Supervisors includes one voting student member serving a one-year term lasting June to June. In order to sit on the Board the student supervisor must go through a series of elections at the institutional and system level. First, he or she must be elected as student body president of their home institution. Next, the student body presidents of each of the eight institutions meet and elect a board member from amongst the group. While there is no official rotation, the institution the last student supervisors attended is not eligible for representation again for two years. However, in order for the current candidates to receive a majority vote and be elected, they must gain the support of students from the ineligible institutions. Serving eight institutions and approximately 50,000 students, the student supervisor can be either an undergraduate or graduate student. The student supervisor receives an undergraduate tuition waiver for their service on the Board that is available for life.

University of Louisiana System

One voting student supervisor sits on the Southern University System Board of Supervisors and represents 4 institutions and 14,000 students. The student supervisor is selected internally among the 4 student government presidents. Student supervisors are not allowed to run for re-election and no institution can be represented two years in a row. Because one institution is a law school, student supervisors can be either graduate or undergraduate students. Student supervisors do not receive any compensation for their role on the Board.

Southern University System

The Southern University System Board of Supervisors oversees four institutions and approximately 14,000 students. One voting student supervisor sits on the Board. The four student body presidents of each institution elect the student supervisor from among themselves; no student can serve more than one term and no student supervisor can come from the same institution two years in a row. Student supervisors can be either an undergraduate or graduate student. A foundation within the System provides the student supervisors with a small stipend.

Maine

The University of Maine System serves seven institutions and approximately 40,000 students. One voting student sits on its Board of Trustees for a two-year term spanning the fiscal year. To fill the position, each institution's student government solicits applications, interviews candidates, and sends one recommendation to the governor. The governor chooses a single student to recommend to the Board and the student must be confirmed by a joint state governance board before they are officially appointed. The student trustee is an undergraduate student and receives no compensation for their role.

Maryland

Serving 12 institutions and approximately 148,000 students, the University System of Maryland Board of Regents includes one voting student member who serves a one-year term based on the fiscal year. The student regent is selected through a process that begins at the institution level. The application is sent to the Student Affairs office at each institution and one candidate is selected based on varying institutional processes. Next, candidates interview before the University System of Maryland Student Council, a student advisory council to the Board of Regents that consists of student representation from each campus. The Council then narrows the candidate pool to three students and sends its recommendation, in order of performance if they so choose, to the Chancellor's office. The three candidates interview with the Chancellor, who then sends his recommendation to the governor's office. Finally, the Appointment Secretary conducts a phone interview and advises the governor, who then makes a selection. Although it is not an official policy, the student regent is traditionally an undergraduate student and never comes from the same institution two years in a row. The student regent does not receive any compensation for his or her service.

Massachusetts

Five students serve on the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees for one-year terms. Student trustees are elected by students at each institution in at-large elections. Two student trustees are granted voting privileges based on a rotation that allows each student trustee to vote for two years. Although their term spans the fiscal year, student trustees are ineligible to vote once they graduate in May. As mentioned before, this structure proved controversial in 2010 when the Board deviated from its typical February schedule and voted on tuition and fee increases in June. This meant that outgoing student trustees were ineligible to vote while new trustees were not yet sworn in until July, leaving the student body unrepresented.

Spanning five institutions, the Board of Trustees serves approximately 63,000 students. Student trustees vary between undergraduate and graduate students. Similar to other Board members, student trustees receive a \$55 stipend for the days they have meetings.

Minnesota

The Board of Trustees for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities includes two voting student trustees, one representing four-year institutions and one representing technology and community colleges. Student trustees serve two-year terms based on the fiscal year and are appointed by the governor after an application process and interview with the governor's office. The Board serves seven universities, 25 community and technology colleges, and 390,000 students. Student trustees can either be graduate or undergraduate students within the system and receive no compensation for their time on the Board.

Montana

One voting student member sits on the Montana University System Board of Regents serving a one-year term spanning the fiscal year. Student regents are selected through a two-step process that begins with interviews conducted by student body presidents of the System's institutions. This collective then selects its top three candidates and sends those names to the governor who makes the final decision. Representing 11 institutions and 42,000 students, the student regent is typically an undergraduate student. As with the other Board members, the student regent receives a \$50 stipend for every day he or she performs an official Board function.

Nebraska

Nebraska State College System

The Nebraska State College System Board of Trustees includes three student trustees from the three institutions in the system. Student trustees serve one-year terms that span May to May. Although student trustees do not have full voting rights they do take part in opinion-voting; they vote prior to the rest of the Board, and that vote, while not counted in the official Board tally, is taken into consideration by Board voters. Candidates for the student trustee position fill out an application at their home institution and are then interviewed by a nominating committee consisting of student leaders and chaired by the current student trustee. The committee then nominates three candidates to the president of the institution who, upon approval, sends those recommendations to the governor's office for appointment. The student trustee position is limited to undergraduate students and those who serve receive no compensation for their role. The Board of Trustees serves three institutions and 8,000 students.

University of Nebraska

Four student members serve on the University of Nebraska Board of Regents for a one-year term spanning the student election cycle of March to March. Similar to student trustees in the Nebraska State Board, student regents participate in opinion-voting which does not count in the official Board vote but are a consideration for the voting members. Student regents are elected by the students at each institution and serve dually as Board members and student body presidents of their home institution. Typically undergraduates, student regents do not receive compensation for their role on the Board. The University of Nebraska Board of Regents serves four institutions and approximately 45,000 students.

New Hampshire

The University of New Hampshire Board of Trustees includes five students who serve one-year terms based on the fiscal year. The Board serves four institutions and approximately 30,000 students. Four student trustees represent the undergraduate students at each of the institutions and one student trustee represents the graduate students of the four institutions. Based on an institutional rotation, only two of the four students have voting privileges with the exception of the graduate student member who is ineligible. The non-voting members of the

Board are referred to as University System Student Board Representatives. Student trustees and board representatives are elected by students in at-large elections, are undergraduate students save for the designated graduate member, and do not receive any compensation for their role on the Board.

New York

State University of New York (SUNY)

The State University of New York (SUNY) system is one of the largest in the nation serving 64 four-year and two-year institutions and approximately 460,000 students. Its Board of Trustees includes one voting student member who serves dually as the student trustee and as the president of the SUNY Student Assembly. The student trustee serves a one-year term spanning the academic year from June to June. The Student Assembly, consisting of members from each of the 64 institutions, chooses a president in a traditional election from among its members. Both undergraduate and graduate students can serve. The student trustee receives a stipend for serving as president of the Student Assembly but no compensation for serving on the Board.

City University of New York (CUNY)

The City University of New York (CUNY) Board of Trustees includes one voting student trustee who serves a one-year term spanning November to October. The student trustee is selected by the students of University Student Senate, a body comprised of students from the 23 four-year and two-year college campuses serving approximately 483,000 students. Student trustees serve simultaneously as the student trustee and chair of the Student Senate. Traditionally, a mix of undergraduate students and graduate students hold the position. The student trustee receives a stipend for serving as chairperson of the Senate but nothing for serving on the Board.

North Carolina

One non-voting student serves on the University of North Carolina Board of Governors in a one-year term that spans the academic year from May to May. The student governor is elected from the University of North Carolina Association of Student Governments (UNCASG) and serves dually as board member and president of this group. The UNCASG consists of student body presidents and

representatives from each of the 17 institutions in the system consisting of approximately 230,000 students. Traditionally, a mix of undergraduate and graduate students have held the position; student trustees receive no compensation for their work on the Board.

North Dakota

There is one voting student member of the North Dakota University System State Board of Higher Education, the body responsible for 11 institutions and approximately 45,000 students. The student board member serves a one-year term congruent with the fiscal year. The North Dakota Student Association, the governing body of the student governments in North Dakota, nominates three students to serve on the board and the governor makes the appointment from among this pool. The student board member has traditionally been a fourth- or a fifth-year senior who has some experience in state politics. The student board member receives a tuition and fee waiver for their year of service on the Board.

Oregon

The Oregon University System State Board of Directors includes two voting student directors who serve two-year terms spanning the fiscal year. The statewide student association, a coalition of student governments from across the state, vets exclusively undergraduate candidates for the position and sends a recommendation to the governor's office. The recommendation is traditionally and unofficially adhered to. As in the case for students presently serving, it is not unusual for the student directors to be reappointed by the governor and serve an additional two-year term. All directors receive a \$500 stipend a month to make up for lost pay. This stipend typically covers the cost of tuition for student directors. The Board serves seven institutions and approximately 90,000 students.

Pennsylvania

The Board of Governors for the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education includes three voting student members who serve one-year terms that begin and end with the last day of classes each academic year. The Board serves 14 institutions and 112,000 students. First elected as presidents by their peers, students then may choose to apply to the Board for membership. The Board then interviews the possible 14 candidates and selects three students to send to the

governor for appointment. Student governors can only be undergraduates and receive no compensation for serving on the Board.

Rhode Island

One voting student member serves on the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education, comprised of three institutions and approximately 45,000 students. The student governor serves a two-year term based on the calendar year (with a common lag of one to three months) and is selected through an application and interview process at the institution level. The applicants are then forwarded to the Board for review and the Board sends its recommendations to the governor. The student governor is typically an undergraduate student and receives no compensation for serving on the Board.

South Dakota

The South Dakota Board of Regents serves six institutions and approximately 33,000 students and includes one voting student regent. The student regent is appointed by the governor to serve a two-year term congruent with the fiscal year and is commonly re-nominated if interested in serving more than one term. There are no written rules or formal application for the nomination of a student regent. Instead, the current student regent announces that he will be stepping down and campuses encourage interested students to send a letter of intent to the governor. The governor's office then narrows the candidate pool, interviews candidates, and makes a selection based on the recommendation of the Executive Director of the Board. There is typically a mix of undergraduate and graduate students serving in the position and student regents traditionally move from their undergraduate to graduate careers while serving on the Board. Like other regents, student regents receive a \$75 stipend for every day that they serve in the official role.

Tennessee

Following the student trustee-designate model, two students serve on the University of Tennessee System Board of Trustees representing 30,000 students and four institutions. The student trustees, one voting second year and one non-voting first year, serve two-year terms based on the fiscal year. The position rotates among the four institutions; each institution has a student trustee once every four years. When it is an institution's turn to put forward a candidate, students run in a peer

election and the top three candidates complete an application and interview with the institution. The institution then forwards these three names to the governor's office for final decision and appointment. The status of the student trustee is determined by which institution is represented; three of the four institutions serve undergraduates while the fourth serves graduate and professional students. Student trustees receive no compensation for their service.

Texas

There are six public systems within the state of Texas. Each system is governed by a Board of Regents and includes one non-voting student regent serving a one-year term from June to June. The position of student regent within the Texas system was only implemented in 2006. No compensation is given for service on the board. Apart from these standards, breadth of system and the specific process for selection vary.

University of Texas System

The University of Texas (UT) Board serves 15 institutions and approximately 204,000 students. The application process in the UT System varies by institution and has no rotational basis. Interested students apply and are then forwarded to the chancellor's office; the field is narrowed through interviews, and recommendations are forwarded to the governor for review and appointment. With nine undergraduate and six medical institutions, the student regent position has been filled by both undergraduate and professional students.

Texas A&M University System

The Texas A&M Board serves 11 institutions and approximately 115,000 students. Each of the 11 institutions recommend five students and these 55 names are forwarded the chancellor. The chancellor then narrows the pool to three to five names and forwards those to the governor for appointment. Traditionally, the chancellor's recommendation is honored. No institution may have back-to-back student regents serving on the Board, and the position may be held by an undergraduate or graduate student. Along with every other regent, the student regent receives an apartment in College Station, the System headquarters, for better access to Board meetings. Regents also receive Blackberries for Board business but no other compensation.

Texas State University System

The Texas State University System Board of Regents serves eight institutions and approximately 73,000 students. The student regent has thus far been an undergraduate student and begins the selection process at the student government level at each institution. Each institution's student government solicits applications and selects the top five candidates. The names are forwarded to the Vice President for Student Affairs who narrows the applicants to two. The president of each institution then narrows the candidates to one and sends that recommendation to the chancellor. The chancellor's office then reviews the eight applications and sends two recommendations to the governor for selection and appointment.

Texas Tech University System

The Texas Tech University System is responsible for 3 institutions and 40,000 students. Each institution nominates five student regent candidates who are sent to the System office where they are narrowed to one to two per institution. From there, the governor's office interviews and selects a single student to serve on the Board. While the student regent can be an undergraduate or graduate student, graduate students have traditionally served in the role. Student regents do not receive compensation for their role on the Board.

University of Houston System

The four institutions within the University of Houston (UH) System serve 80,000 students. In selecting the student regent, institutions solicit applications which are reviewed by the presidents of each institution. Presidents then send their recommendations to the chancellor who reviews and sends further recommendations to the governor. Candidates are only interviewed at the gubernatorial level before appointment. Traditionally, the students serving in the role have been a mix of graduate and undergraduate students.

University of North Texas System

The Board for the North Texas System serves three institutions and approximately 40,000 students. Student regents serving in the position are traditionally a mix of undergraduate or graduate students and rotate between institutions. Each year the designated institution solicits applications, selects top candidates, and sends those to the governor's office. The governor's office then interviews candidates over the phone and makes a final appointment.

Wisconsin

The Board of Regents for the University of Wisconsin (UW) includes two voting student members serving two-year terms based on the fiscal year. Serving 11 comprehensive universities, two research institutions, 13 two-year colleges, and 173,000 students, one student regent is selected to represent the interest of traditional students and the other to represent the interests of nontraditional students (24 years of age or older). When seeking a new student regent, the governor's office sends a notice to institution leaders soliciting nominations. Interested students submit an application directly to the governor and are narrowed down by the governor's office to three to five candidates. These students are then interviewed by the president of the Board and the governor's staff and, based on their recommendation, the governor appoints the student regents. Since the bulk of UW students are undergraduates, an effort is made to appoint an undergraduate student regent. Student regents receive no compensation for their role on the Board.

Part III

The Effective Student Trustee

Now that we have examined the history and role of academic governing boards, the characteristics of the ideal trustee, and the demographics and structures of the current student trustees and their boards, we can begin to examine the role, challenges, and effectiveness of the student trustee.

This distinctive position calls for everything the typical trustee is and more. The student trustee must balance the role of board member with the role of student. To be effective, they must tackle the position from both sides, dually responsible to the board and accountable to students. They face an uphill battle in proving themselves with even the most collegial and welcoming of boards. The constraints of time, travel, coursework, and apathetic students present significant challenges. Innumerable variables influence effectiveness, many of which are beyond the control of the student trustee.

Two overarching factors, those of dedication and work ethic, can greatly impact the effectiveness of the overall experience. As much of the literature cites and many student trustees reiterated, “effective academic trusteeship is learned, not innate.”⁶³ Whether a student trustee takes the purely delegate approach to their role or the trustee approach, to a certain degree they sit on the board to represent the student interest. This responsibility is daunting no matter how large or small the system; it cannot be taken lightly and deserves the absolute best effort. The following are recommendations, including suggestions on the student trustees’ relationship with the board, with students, and with one another, addressing the challenges they’ll face and how to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, and fulfillment in their role as a student trustee.

63 Ingram, Xxvi.

Chapter 6

What Comes First

Serving on an academic board of trustees provides a great deal of opportunities but also requires a great degree of responsibility. Student trustees, as with every other member of the board, are public figures who represent the system and institutions at all times. Maintaining a respectful presence, being careful not to abuse the privileges of the board, and managing the demands of being a student first are all essential to being an effective student trustee.

One student trustee, when speaking of his own experience, said “sometimes I feel as if there are too many balls in the air and I can’t help but drop a few. Maintaining classes, a social life, contact with family – all dwindled. It’s like having two full time jobs – trying to be effective at both is a challenge.” To help keep his life balanced, another student trustee mentioned the importance of having a group of friends available for support. A third trustee stressed that student trustees need to come in with the correct mindset about time commitments and responsibilities. His enthusiasm for the position allowed him to view the role as an opportunity, not as an obligation. Many student trustees cautioned that while it was tempting to put all their energy into the board, they often had to step back and reevaluate their priorities. They all agreed that being a student came first; simultaneously delivering on their board responsibilities is difficult, but achievable.

Dive Right In

The advice to new board members both from the literature on academic trusteeship and the experienced student trustee is clear: There is no time to lose. Scholars of trusteeship argue that it takes a trustee anywhere from one to three years to become acclimated with the roles and culture of the board, the system,

and their role as a trustee before they are effective.⁶⁴ Because the student trustee typically spends only one or two years on the board, they do not have the luxury of time. To live up to their responsibilities, they need to be effective right out of the gate. Ideally, before they step into their first board meeting, student trustees should be educated on the culture and dynamics of the board, the missions and demographics of the institutions in the system, the structures of shared governance and student leadership within each institution and the system, and the major issues facing all of the aforementioned bodies.

Realistically, most institutions do not have the apparatus in place to provide this education and student trustees are often left to themselves to seek out mentorships, board and institutional documentation, and other resources to aid their integration. To further complicate matters, student trustees often are simultaneously balancing full course-loads, part-time jobs, and managing the general pressures of being a young person in college.

In order to counter this, student trustees should take advantage of any available transition periods before they are sworn-in as official board members. If lucky enough to have such transition time, new student trustees should shadow their predecessor, attend board and committee meetings and social events, and begin scheduling campus tours immediately, utilizing their summer hiatus. They should establish communication with student leaders and meet with other trustees informally in order to build relationships.

Student trustees should not rely on the system, institutions, or other board members to supply the education they will need. They should dive into their role immediately and learn as much as they can as quickly as possible. Time on the board is precious and taking advantage of any transitional period and resources is essential to launching a successful tenure. As one student trustee put it, "I only have one year to be effective; my transition time was a bonus."

Relationship to the Board

Student trustees often experience a culture clash when first appointed to an academic governing board. At the average age of 23 they find themselves surrounded by some of the most successful individuals in the state and sometimes the nation.

64 Duderstradt, *The View*, 218.

Tierny, 107.

Tead, 174.

Kerr, 48.

In order to be effective, the student trustee must establish and actively maintain healthy relationships with the board, other trustees, and system and institutional leadership. The dual nature of the student trustee role as well as the hot-button issues apt to come before the board can challenge this relationship.

While the extent of these relationships may vary greatly, the student trustee should strive to conduct himself or herself professionally while around the board. In offering their suggestions and insights, current student trustees placed special emphasis on relationship-building with other trustees, doing the homework, asking tough questions, and selecting specific issue areas to tackle. Coming prepared and with a compassionate, community-minded attitude are two valuable traits for effective board interaction.

Building Relationships

An overwhelming majority of student trustees listed building strong relationships with other trustees as essential to their effectiveness. As one student trustee stated, “students are often the last ones to be appreciated and the first ones to be criticized.” To help augment this, create an atmosphere of mutual respect and familiarity by meeting individually with each trustee, attending social events with the board, and seeking out mentors.

The frequent turnover of student trustees, which can occur every year, may lead other trustees to view it at best as a transient position with minimal impact and at worst, a position that drains board resources by requiring constant training and managing. This perception can hinder the effectiveness of even the most impressive student trustee. Spending informal time with each trustee allows them to understand the background, goals, and perspectives of a student trustee and can lead to a greater trust in his ability to contribute to the board during their tenure. As one student trustee observed, “If they don’t trust you, they will leave you out of something, no problem. If they trust you, they will bring you into conversations.”

According to the literature on trusteeship, “Social interactions among trustees enhance collegiality and inclusiveness, which, in turn, infuse a board’s work.”⁶⁵ It is the job of the student trustee to forge these connections, both socially and professionally. As many student trustees cited in their interviews, merely showing up is the first step to being a good trustee. Strict attendance at all board meetings as well as board social events is key to establishing grounded, well-rounded relationships. A number of

65 Chait, 63.

student trustees cited the importance of supporting these events as part of the overall effort of a public servant “to be seen” and thus taken seriously by all involved. One student trustee even advised that inviting board members to student activities they might not normally go to can go a long way in delivering the student message.

Navigating the intricacies of student trusteeship should not be done alone. Eliciting the help of a board mentor can help speed the orientation process and help define an otherwise ambiguous role. Mentors give insight into the board’s history, culture, and dynamic that might not always be apparent to a newcomer and can serve as a trusted teammate when controversial issues inevitably arise. They can provide guidance on how the student trustee can most efficiently use their limited time on the board and can aid in establishing and helping the student trustee achieve his or her goals. According to one student trustee, a good mentor “will have your back no matter what.”

Do Your Homework

There are a number of foregone conclusions involved with serving on an academic board. These often include drawn-out meetings, controversial issues, and public attention. Another foregone conclusion is that a lengthy, time consuming “board book” will be delivered shortly before every meeting of the board and its committees containing agendas, resolutions, budgets, and oftentimes extensive, detailed reports.

While it may be difficult to balance schoolwork and this reading, it is imperative that student trustees do their proverbial homework. This means not just reading the board book but also contacting system and institution administration and staff for background on an issue, reaching out for the student perspective, and running ideas by other trustees.

A significant number of student trustees were adamant that reading the material, researching issues thoroughly, and being well prepared for meetings was essential to their effectiveness. Many felt that putting in this effort helped them gain the respect of the other trustees, even those who were skeptical of student representation. One student trustee advised other student trustees to work hardest at issues they have little interest or background knowledge in, such as the more complicated fiscal matters facing a board. Researching these issues beyond the information provided equips student trustees with the ability to surprise supporters and critics alike. It also demonstrates that they can be counted on to participate on a deep level on all issues and not just on the issues that are

important to them; this invokes the board's respect and trust. They will be more likely to listen to and act on what the student trustee says when he or she speaks about the salient issues. It cannot be overstated that "the more informed trustees are, the better they can advocate for the institutions" and, in the case of the student trustee, for the students.⁶⁶

Ask Questions, Even the Tough Ones

Asking questions, even those considered "naïve," helps ensure institutional accountability and can introduce a fresh perspective to an issue.⁶⁷ During all board meetings and board-related activities, student trustees should keep the following discerning questions, provided by Carothers in *Governing Public Colleges and Universities*, in mind when first stepping into the role:

- What is the mission of the system as a whole, and what is the mission of each institution within the system?
- Who is responsible for fulfilling those missions, and what are their basic strategies for achieving success?
- What are the principles under which resources are allocated within the system and on the campus, and to what extent are the allocations consistent with the respective missions?

It is not uncommon for new student trustees to feel intimidated by the board, and even these questions can sometimes feel confrontational. They must remember that a key aspect of their role is to relentlessly assess the system and its institutions, and this simply cannot be done without asking tough questions and occasionally even being controversial. This responsibility is especially important for the student trustee, as they are often subject, along with the rest of the student body, to the result of policymaking in their campus life.

Asking the difficult questions in a respectful manner ensures the quality and solvency of the system and its institutions. Especially during difficult fiscal times, student trustees should keep in mind that neither students nor systems can "afford to have passive trustees."⁶⁸ The very point of having a board is "to have varying opinions on subjects" and vet each idea in order to make the best decision. Deferring to system or institution administration without criticism or question is counterintuitive to the trustee's fundamental role as steward.

66 McDonald, 15.

67 Chait, 66.

68 Ingram, 21.

One student trustee cited that it all revolves around a student's confidence level: "You shouldn't be afraid to piss people off or feel somehow less researched in your positions. Be able to defend and articulate why your positions make sense. It is easy to be pushed around when you have a lot of strong opinions and successful people, but this is not your role."

Is This a Hill You Want to Die On?

Having a thorough understanding of the role of a specific board, its relationships with each institution it governs, and distinguishing exactly what is a board issue and what is an institutional issue is essential to a student trustee's effectiveness. Student trustees commonly cited difficulty in appeasing passionate students when it came to issues that, on a systematic level, were not board issues but rather the responsibility of the individual institutions. Put simply, trustees and boards "cannot and need not know the institution's or system's every nuance, nook, and cranny."⁶⁹ This concept can often be difficult for student trustees to grasp considering their inevitable closeness to many issues as a student. In many cases, student trustees come from student government backgrounds where they often had the ability to address any issue that came their way. Student trustees can find this new operational model a difficult adjustment. Learning to differentiate between board issues and institutional issues is crucial to save on frustration and misdirected campaigning.

On the other hand, attempting to tackle every board issue of importance to the student trustee is not realistic, either. Picking your battles is essential to maintaining the political capital necessary to be effective. Many of those interviewed recommend picking two or three issues a student trustee is passionate about and concentrating his or her energy on those few goals. A student trustee should identify a few salient issues to defend during their term and research those issues thoroughly and ask "where and how can I leave my mark?"

The infamous slow-moving nature of academia, however, does not always lend itself well to the rapid change student trustees often wish to accomplish in their short terms. In many cases, student trustees may face significant resistance to change due to the short lifespan of a trustee's board career and the often controversial issues they choose to champion. Thus, student trustees should choose the issues they are most passionate about and ask themselves a simple question: Is this a hill I want to die on?

69 Ingram, 4.

Represent the Underdog

Student trustees are often the only board member who spends every day on a college campus. This generates a greater system-wide perspective than perhaps any other board member which in turn aids in their responsibility to represent the interests of all students in the system and not just those from their home institution. System boards have long struggled to maintain a balanced system-wide viewpoint as flagship or research institutions often garner more attention than regional or comprehensive institutions. Alumni from these schools may also be disproportionately represented on the board, a practice that only furthers favoritism. It is often the student trustee with a direct student constituency, therefore, who takes the more balanced perspective. Student trustees, whether appointed or elected, should strive to correct this natural imbalance of the system when approaching their role by keeping all the systems' students in mind.

The student body's voice and their interests can be lost in the board room and it's crucial that student trustees, whether elected or appointed, adopting the delegate model of representation or the trustee model, be the representative of the underdog, the minority, and the underrepresented.

Many student trustees interviewed cautioned that it is imperative student trustees never lose sight of the student perspective when serving on the board. Several student trustees also mentioned that even when they did not vote with the student perspective, they still made a concerted effort to voice that perspective to the rest of the board.

One successful approach to voicing the student opinion, as cited by a number of student trustees, is to preface statements with "From the student perspective," and use anecdotal examples of student issues to portray sensitive points.⁷⁰ This allows student trustees to have a greater freedom in arguing for or against an issue. It also allows them to personify the issues boards typically view from a strictly governing perspective and bring them down to the campus level.

A Pound of Salt

Stepping into the atmosphere of an already established board is difficult for any trustee. Learning who and what to invest in is particularly challenging for a student trustee who may not yet have experience managing the multiple

70 Cheng, Jesse. Phone interview. University of California. April 9, 2010.

Doucette, Greg. Phone interview. University of North Carolina. May 8, 2010.

personalities of a such a group. When seeking background information or advice, students often “discover that opinion varies with regard to these questions, depending upon the perspective of those questioned.”⁷¹ Furthering the confusion, “the antics between board members can sometimes be entertaining and always are useful to an understanding of group behavior, human psychology, and leadership; the boardroom is real-life theater where everyone present is a player” but “it is not uncommon to find that people behave differently in the boardroom than they do when they are not there.”⁷²

With this in mind, student trustees should exercise caution when developing opinions and take every perspective they receive with a healthy dose of salt. One student trustee who experienced difficulty with this issue advised that when attempting to gain perspective on an issue, student trustees should “ask three or four different people and then triangulate what the truth is.”

Close relationships with other board members or administration can influence decisions or actions and this influence should always be weighed. Triangulate the truth and go with what your instinct is telling you.

Stand By Your Board

As mentioned in the discussion of the ideal trustee, the literature on trusteeship is constant in placing great emphasis on boards acting as a whole. With often little or no experience in the corporate world, student trustees need to understand that the “corporate concept of the group as the decision-making entity constitutes a core value and fundamental tenet of trusteeship.”⁷³

Despite this limited experience, the student trustees interviewed seemed to have a firm grasp on the authority of the board versus the autonomy of the trustee. More so than any other trustee save the board chair, the student trustee’s role in the media and state government is unique. Varying greatly board to board, some student trustees experienced more freedom in voicing their opinion, while others cited many times over that certain actions, such as representing student interests at the state level or to the media, were frowned upon.

As a general rule, student trustees should examine the culture of their board and always approach every situation in a respectful, business-like manner. The

71 Carothers, 214.

72 Ingram, 94.

73 Chait, 59.

caution is that student trustees should always acknowledge the board's stand before they comment on the student perspective to an outside body. Discuss the potential of speaking to the media or in front of policymakers before an issue arises and you can usually sidestep the controversy.

Presence in State Government

Seventy-one percent of student trustees interviewed stated that they actively took part in representing student interests in their state capitals, whether by lobbying, meeting with legislators, or testifying on bills. Many also took an active role in organizing system-wide or statewide student lobbying days that focused on student interests or higher education policy. For those student trustees who were not active in this capacity, a number cited either an ineffective or out-of-session legislature or that it was not part of the student trustee role or was frowned upon by the board.

Whether student trustees choose to be active at this level or not, it is important that they understand the considerable statement, both positive and negative, their presence as a board member can often make. It is often refreshing for policymakers to see student trustees active at the state level – although throwing one's weight behind the wrong issue may be controversial. One student trustee found that being a constant presence in the state legislature was often encouraged, especially during efforts to encourage the participation of college students in the political process.

Chapter 7

Representation: A Democratic Theory Approach

One of the most prevalent challenges facing student trustees is how to effectively balance their dual and commonly contradicting roles as student representative and full board member. Broadly, the models of representation most commonly assumed by traditionally elected representatives in politics, those of either delegate or trustee, can be juxtaposed to the student trustee experience as well. These two models, introduced by political theorist and British politician Edmund Burke in 1774, state that representatives who approach their role through the delegate model voice, defend, and take action on issues strictly based on the sentiments of the constituents they represent.⁷⁴ Conversely, representatives utilizing the trustee model take these same sentiments into consideration but rely on his or her own judgment, wisdom, and experiences when weighing actions and voting.⁷⁵

Of the two models, it is generally agreed that the trustee model allows representatives greater freedom in making decisions yet also places them at risk of being replaced by a discontented constituency.⁷⁶ While Burke and other English political scientists such as John Stuart Mill championed the trustee model, American thinkers such as James Madison (not to mention the traditional American political culture in general) tend to embrace the delegate model.⁷⁷ Just

74 Burke, 63.

75 Burke, 63.

76 Mill, John Stewart. *On Representative Government*. (London, 1861), 218.

77 Nelson. Brian R. *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Second Edition, 1996), 269

as there are no tried and true answers for the traditional, democratically elected official struggling with effective representation, there exist no guidelines or obvious solutions for student trustees.

Despite the relative flexibility of decision-making most academic governing boards enjoy, the ever-expanding role of and demands on higher education in concert with a steady trend in state disinvestment of financial support has placed significant strains on academia and its most public face, the board.⁷⁸ These internal and external constituency pressures and the balance of the board's dual responsibility to the academy and the public interest require that its members make difficult decisions that can often negatively affect certain constituencies. In general, these negative effects, primarily those in the form of budget cuts that affect quality and institutional experience, are felt most by students.

This places the student trustee in an even more precarious position than most if not all other members of the board. While the overwhelming majority of traditional board members are appointed by the governor, 65 percent of student trustees are appointed and 35 percent are peer elected. Save the relatively few boards that include faculty representation, the student trustee, no matter how he or she gained board membership, is often the lone board member with a *direct* constituency to represent, defend, and appease.

Taken from a democratic theory perspective, these differences in selection processes between traditional board member and the student trustee speak to a significant variation in the role and representational demands experienced by both. Generally, the only mechanisms for recall that exist for student trustees are limited to academic hardship and criminal misconduct. Those who are appointed are not liable to the same pressures of reelection traditional, democratically elected representatives face if they choose to run for reelection.

A number of political philosophers contend that the mechanism for selecting representatives plays an essential role in the relationship between representative and constituent.⁷⁹ Because the selection of these appointed student trustees is dependent to some degree or another on the support of students (through student-led vetting processes), it is fair to contend that they would be more likely to have stronger ties to this group than not. To the extent in which these ties, based solely on the process of constituency input for gubernatorial appointments, translates into the preference

78 Ingram, 21.

79 Eastwood, 176.

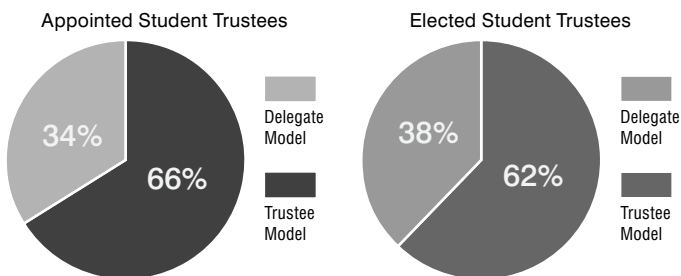
and utilization of the trustee or the delegate model of representation is not known.

Of the 17 student trustees who gained access to the board through peer election, ten officially served in the dual role of student trustee and either student body president or chair of the statewide student association. The majority of the other seven were constitutionally bound to serve as an ex officio or non-voting member of the student government association – thus creating a direct tie to students. Forty-seven (or 98 percent) of those interviewed cited that they had active contact with some sort of student representative body within their system or institution.

Again, whether or not this active contact translated into a preferred model of representation cannot be known. It can be assumed, however, that the student trustee's breadth of knowledge and perspective of issues affecting students would only naturally be more significant in those who sustained contact with students.

When asked whether they would ever vote or speak out against the will of students (or adopt the trustee model of representation over the delegate model), 65 percent responded that they either had or would "if necessary," qualifying this action with the sentiment that despite their ultimate decision they would still persist in voicing the student opinion. The majority of those who regarded their role as a trustee rather than a delegate cited that their responsibility was not only to balance the concerns of the students but also to balance the interests of higher education in general.

The most interesting data is perhaps the breakdown of role perceptions based on the process of selection. Of those student trustees interviewed who gained access to the board via gubernatorial appointments, 34 percent embraced the delegate model while a resounding 66 percent favored the trustee model (see chart below). Conversely, of those who gained access through peer elections, 38 percent favored the delegate model while 62 percent interpreted their role as a trustee.



While telling, this overlap is in no way a mandate. A certain amount of personal preference, completely separate from the political implications of the decision, could certainly influence variation. The culture and history of a board, whether collegial or resistant towards the student trustee, could also play a significant role in representational philosophy. A board that regards a student trustee as a mere token student representative, for instance, may run the risk of alienating the student. The student trustee may then feel like he or she is not a full member of the board and view their role the way the board expects: as a student representative acting in a delegate capacity.

What is most telling, however, is the reasoning behind a number of student trustee's decisions. Of those who favored trusteeship and were gubernatorially appointed, the majority cited the traditional trustee credo: that they had been appointed based on their judgment and were expected to weigh the interests of all constituencies involved: students, faculty, taxpayers, and the greater public interest. One student trustee said that her success, particularly during meetings when controversial student issues arose, was her calm and reasoned way of delivering the student voice. "I realized that those students who hold the bullhorn and those students who sit in the boardroom are equally important. I just realized I was the latter." Board members consistently expressed their appreciation for the professional way in which she delivered the passionate student perspective.

Many cited the fact that as board members they were privy to information and perspectives that many students were not and thus they could more effectively balance these perspectives. One student trustee commented that if they were expected to fall in line with student sentiment 100 percent of the time, their seat should simply be replaced by a student poll. The majority of student trustees who chose the trustee model stated that they simply were privy to more information than the typical student and thus were in the best position to do what's in the best interest of the entire institution and future students.

Those student trustees who preferred the delegate model and were also peer elected similarly took the traditional delegate perspective: that they were elected by a constituency and it was their responsibility to reflect constituency sentiments through actions and votes. These students often stated that had they not, no other board member would have expressed the student concern and their interests would not have been a factor in decision making. One student trustee expressed that he felt more comfortable utilizing the delegate model of representation because of his

shorter term on the board. Another stated that this model allows student trustees to “add a dynamic to the discussion and place pressure on other regents.”

The better or more effective model, the trustee or the delegate, is therefore partly subjective to and dependent on the personal beliefs of the student trustee, the culture of the board, and the process of selection. Certainly, whichever model a student trustee chooses to embrace requires a certain degree of calculation and finesse in execution. Trustees must remember that despite their personal opinion or subsequent actions, they are still responsible for communicating the student voice to the board. Delegates must consider the political nature of the board and pick and choose battles accordingly in order to maintain effectiveness and objectivity.

What is most important to remember, according to a number of current student trustees, is that there are situations that call for both models and a sense of balance is essential.

Chapter 8

Relationship with Students and Other Student Trustees

Regardless of representational philosophies, student trustees have an obligation to both the board and the student perspective. The student trustee is the liaison and conduit between these two groups. Delivering the student perspective to the board should be in conjunction with bringing the board's questions, concerns, and perspectives to the students. Communication is the core of the relationship a trustee must develop with the student body, and maintaining that relationship through direct and indirect communication, and working alongside students, makes for a more effective student trustee. As one student trustee put it, "Visibility leads to credibility which leads to trust."

Communication

Keeping in constant and ready contact with students legitimizes the role of the student trustee to both the board and to the constituency they were elected or appointed to represent. According to Chait in *Improving the Performance of Governing Boards*, all trustees "need to be out there walking around if you're going to govern responsibly," or else they run the risk of being a "captive of whatever the administration says."⁸⁰ Similarly, Ingram stresses the importance of communication in *Governing Public Colleges and Universities*: "Finding better ways to communicate with everyone who has a stake in higher education, building new coalitions and more trust to accomplish what must be done, and avoiding the "we-

they” syndrome so seemingly prevalent in contemporary society and in higher education” is imperative.⁸¹

Effective communication with students can serve as an indispensable tool when working with the board. As the student governor from UNC pointed out, “Having 230,000 people behind you is more powerful than any vote you can ever have and provide more benefit than anything else.”⁸²

Student trustees interviewed commonly listed contact with students as a priority, and that this interaction led to greater effectiveness. One student trustee made it her top priority, feeling that she would only be successful if she fostered increased communication between the two parties.

To achieve active communication, student trustees should use a variety of mediums. Explored below are the most common and most effective strategies and mediums, organized by direct and indirect communication.

Direct Communication

Ninety-two percent of student trustees listed contact with student governments or statewide/system-wide student associations as their primary mode of communicating with students. Many already hold positions that facilitates this contact: Ten elected student regents serve in the dual role of student trustee and student body president (Colorado, LSU, Nebraska, Pennsylvania) or chair of the system-wide student councils (CUNY, North Carolina). Other elected student trustees (Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire) serve on the student governments of their home institutions in an official *ex officio* capacity. Still a greater number of those appointed serve in *ex officio* roles on statewide or system-wide student governing councils (Maryland, CSU, and Minnesota).

Those student trustees who do not serve in official capacities still keep in contact with student governments or similar groups. Many make it a point early in their careers to visit every student government and meet personally with each student body president. For systems consisting of significantly more institutions, such as CSU or CUNY, or separated by large or complex geographic distances, such as Texas or Hawaii, this task can be difficult. To combat these challenges, student trustees can utilize technology, hosting conference calls or teleconferences with student leaders.

81 Ingram. 22.

82 Doucette.

Building and maintaining robust email listservs is also a common practice of student trustees, connecting them with the largest possible audience. Student trustees make it a point to have their contact information readily available and encourage every student they met to join their listserv.

Student trustees also capitalize on their official campus tours and visits by meeting with students at events organized by the institution. Another means of making oneself accessible to the student body is to hold and advertise consistent “office hours” during which students and members of the academic community are welcomed to visit with their student trustee in a designated location.

Indirect Communication

In addition to direct communication tactics, there are a number of indirect methods student trustees can utilize to stay in contact with students. These include social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, writing online blogs, posting surveys, or working with the media. Of those surveyed, roughly 57 percent responded that they either used or planned on using Facebook or Twitter to share updates and communicate with students. These tools provide student trustees with a greater personal touch when communicating, allowing them to post updates, share the board’s schedule, post relevant news articles, and seek student feedback on issues, all in real time. Similarly, blogs provide student trustees with an interactive space to share board activities, express their opinions in length, and allow for direct feedback from students.

The student trustees from the University of California, for instance, have made a concerted effort to utilize these online tools in a number of ways. For each committee and full board meeting, the student trustees pick agenda items they believe are important to students and post them over Facebook and Twitter and write about them in their UC Student Regent blog in an effort to solicit student feedback.⁸³ Student trustees who utilize online mediums consider their efforts in indirect communication to be highly successful at reaching a wide audience of students.⁸⁴

A more traditional means of indirect communication is working with the media, both on and off campus. Approximately 47 percent of those student trustees interviewed stated that they had or planned to actively work with the media, either by writing opinion editorials or working with the editors of campus newspapers

83 Cheng.

84 Cheng, Doucette.

on stories related to higher education by providing background information.

The majority of those interviewed stated that they would be more than happy to work with the media and answer reporter's questions but did not actively seek out such attention. The student trustees who utilized this method did find it to be an effective tool for communication; however, those who did not interact with the media cited that such actions were frowned upon by their boards. Certainly, the broader implications of representing the board in the media should be taken into consideration by student trustees before action is taken.

Don't Reinvent the Wheel

The considerably short time most student trustees have on the board, whether serving one or two-year terms, makes effective time management essential. Attempting to establish brand new mechanisms for communication with students can prove time consuming and not always necessary. Utilizing and, if needed, refining the already established lines of communication between student trustee and students (including student governments and student advisory boards) can often be a more efficient use of time. Why reinvent the wheel?

Of course, it is at the discretion of the student trustee to evaluate the effectiveness of these lines of communication and decide whether to use them, or perhaps realize that they do require improvement. The student trustee from the Rhode Island Board, for example, saw a marked absence of a system-wide student council and made it his "legacy goal" to establish a student advisory group to the Board that consisted of student representation from each institution. In this case, he was faced with inventing the wheel and made it his goal to do just that.

Don't be Afraid to be Controversial

This document has discussed in detail how the nature of the student trustee role is unique to other trustees on the board, and how this contrast has the potential to lend itself to an uncomfortable power dynamic. Being prepared, engaging fully, and doing the homework helps level the playing field; so does remembering that everyone on the board is a peer, not a superior. Similarly, student trustees should not be intimidated by students or groups of students passionately disagreeing with a decision or action.

It helps to keep this in mind when it's time to take a controversial stand or cast an unpopular vote. Student trustees must not shy away from the difficult

decisions the board is charged with making and they cannot base their judgments and actions on the potential backlash of board members or students.

As one student trustee put it, “Be prepared to make decisions that can make you unpopular with your friends for a little while – if someone’s not mad at you about something you’re probably not doing your job well.” This sentiment was seconded by another student trustee who stated that “Sometimes you’ll know you made a good decision when everyone is equally angry with you.”

“Team Student Trustee”

Many of the boards of four-year public systems include more than one student member; some adhere to the designate model and only allow limited student voting rights, while others have multiple voting student trustees. Acting collectively, especially when it comes to voting, can boost the influence of student trustees as a whole.

In particular, student trustees serving on boards containing multiple student trustees with limited votes, such as the case with designate models and systems such as Illinois, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, can work together to maximize their ultimate effectiveness. Consulting each student trustee on important votes adds crucial support to a cause but also makes the non-voting student trustees feel more invested in their role. A good model is the University of Illinois System Board’s three student trustees who agreed before the voting student trustee was selected that the consensus of the group would be used to determine the overall student vote. Student trustees from another board joked that they are “team student trustee.”

On a similar note, student trustees with varying approaches to the role can find ways to balance each other on their board and work to everyone’s benefit by utilizing the unique talents of each individual student trustee. Regardless of voting power, partnering is far more effective than working toward different objectives. There are simply too many other pressures that can hinder the successful impact of the student trustee without additional challenges from their fellow student trustees.

Passing the Torch

Transitions in which the new student trustee receives detailed institutional history, insights into the culture and politics of the board, and general nuances of the role can save precious time and energy. Considering the value a thoughtful

transition can provide, it would make sense that such a practice was typical. Unfortunately, student trustees interviewed had varying experiences regarding transition practices on their board: Some negative, some positive, many nonexistent.

As previous suggestions stated, there are many ways to utilize the transition time before becoming a full-fledged board member, but it cannot be understated how vital the information held by previous student trustees can be. New student trustees must reach out to their predecessors, even if those predecessors haven't reached out to them.

One student trustee interviewed suggested that advice be sought not only from a direct predecessor but also from student trustees from throughout the board's history. Gathering for a "transition" lunch meeting or similarly casual affair at the beginning of the board year can serve both as an effective training tool for the new student trustee and provide the former student trustees the opportunity to share their invaluable experiences, mistakes, and wisdom, thus helping to ensure the institution or system they served continues to thrive.

It is of interest to note that many of those student trustees interviewed who did not benefit from an effective transition from their predecessor made a follow-up statement that they intended to provide an in-depth transition for their own successor when the time came.

Looking Beyond the Board, the System

Considering there are only a handful of student trustees across the country experiencing the same pressures of public system board service, it is readily apparent that these unique individuals should seek the friendship and support of their fellow student trustees. The literature on trusteeship cites that looking beyond one's own board can grant a new and fresh perspective on the common issues facing U.S. higher education.⁸⁵ The work *Improving the Performance of Governing Boards* states this sentiment perfectly: "Conversations with members of other boards partially compensate for the relatively limited frame of reference of most trustees...The lack of a comparable perspective leads board members to erroneous conclusions, such as a sense that the problems their college faces are unique or, conversely, that the problems are avoidable."⁸⁶

85 Dana, Ellis Huntington. "Why College Trustees?" (*The Journal of Higher Education*, 18.5, 1947), 259.

86 Chait, 96.

Seeking the advice and support of student trustees from other boards can prove immensely helpful and reassuring, especially in stressful times such as budget cuts and tuition increases. Perhaps creating a social organization of student trustees nation-wide can be one student trustee's "legacy goal."

Living Up to the Title

The seriousness with which the position of student trustee should ideally be held is important to acknowledge. According to one scholar on trusteeship, "Good trustees undertake their office with a sense of responsibility and readiness to take enough time to study and understand educational problems and practices and to become acquainted with their own institution in more than a superficial way. Lack of time, or failure to take enough time for the work is often the reason why a trustee proves inadequate."⁸⁷

Many student trustees expressed that the success of the role is completely dependent on the dedication, temerity and qualifications of the individual student trustee. Considering the depth of the challenges and the added pressures student trustees face, the decision to serve on an academic governing board should not be taken lightly. Its success and effectiveness all depend on the willingness of the student trustee to dedicate the time and energy necessary to be successful and effective. No board secretary or fellow board member will hold a student trustee's hand.

87 Martorana, 39.

Chapter 9

Support from Systems and Universities

Effective student trusteeship is primarily the responsibility of the student trustee, but it can be greatly enhanced with the support of boards, universities, and systems. Providing students support through mentorships, orientations, and opportunities to grow professionally is an investment in the board and in the future leaders of the state and nation. Boards benefit from a student trustee who is better prepared to engage in thoughtful, knowledgeable discussion and more effective decision-making. Students benefit when they understand the board's expectations for their role and can target their performance accordingly.

The institutional and personal support of student trustee mitigates their particular challenges in the position and provides clear guidance to help ensure their success. Systems and institutions can adopt a number of measures to support their student trustees, many of which are listed below.

Equal Treatment

The tremendous amount of time trustees, both traditional trustees and student trustees, dedicate to the board and system deserves enormous respect: "Trustees must view the issues before the board as important and the board's involvement as central to the institution's ability to resolve those issues."⁸⁸ Similarly, trustees need to believe that their specific contributions and efforts are substantial and will in fact make a difference. As one student trustee put it, "It takes an unbelievable amount of foresight and faith to believe the things you are doing now have the outcome they are being prescribed." If certain member's efforts are

not afforded the same importance as the efforts of other board members they may become disheartened and lose faith in the board.

As a function of board support, it cannot be understated how beneficial it is to the student trustees' job performance when they are treated as full and equal board members on par with the other traditional members of the board. Most boards are currently succeeding in this respect. An overwhelming majority, 87 percent, of those student trustees interviewed stated that they felt like a full board member in every way and were shown respect and treated equally by their peers. This figure may speak to any number of contributing factors, from positive characteristics of current board structures, such as an open-minded board, to the quality and work ethic of a student trustee.

Those student trustees who responded that they did not feel like full board members stated that this hindered their ultimate effectiveness. Successful boards invite the student trustee to all board functions, include them in all board communication, and ensure that every board member treats them as a peer. The literature on trusteeship is consistent in insisting that equal access to information, a sense of inclusivity, and consistent encouragement to participate are all essential aspects of a cohesive board.

According to Ingram, "governing boards are only as effective as their individual members."⁸⁹ With this standard in mind, boards cannot be effective if even one of their members is insecure in their role. As *The Effective Board of Trustees* notes, "a group cannot easily develop or sustain unity if even a small minority of its members chronically feel that they are excluded from some inner circle or kept in the dark while others are always 'in the know.'"⁹⁰ In the case of boards and specifically their student trustees, efficacy is inherently tied to equality.

Importance of the Vote

Of the roughly 35 percent of the student trustees serving on boards without voting rights, approximately 47 percent responded that they wish they had the ability to vote. It should be noted that often along with non-voting status comes a student trustee's inability to be privy to certain board communications or to have executive privilege status.

89 303.

90 Chait, 44.

According to a number of student trustees serving on boards with only limited student voting, those with voting privileges tend to take their role more seriously than those without. This, of course, is not a general rule but rather the speculation of student trustees. Still, it is supported by the point made in multiple texts on trusteeship that “board members without equal access to information may not feel or act like equal members of the group.”⁹¹ One student trustee who did not have voting powers was adamant that the ability to vote would validate his role. Without an equal say in board matters, he was merely a token student representative. Having the ability to vote is important for a student trustee to be a full board member not only in sentiment but also in name.

Orientation

Literature on trusteeship is clear that “a well-conducted orientation process is an essential requirement for effective trusteeship.”⁹² Although student trustees’ experiences with orientation varied greatly board to board, the importance of having some kind of formal instruction, even if it is considered ineffective, is better than having no orientation at all. The student trustees who received no formal orientation often felt a sense of uneasiness and insecurity when first arriving in the boardroom.

Ideally, orientations should focus on introducing the student trustee to the key system staff, explaining in detail the missions of the system and each institution, and outlining the expectations of the board and its members. Especially for trustees unfamiliar with system management, it is important to make them “aware of how the responsibilities of the board and the individual trustee differ and complement one another.”⁹³ Boards should adopt a “brief statement of individual trustees’ responsibilities to clarify what board members expect of one another.”⁹⁴ This statement should be universal for all board members but should include a supplementary list of expectations specific to the student trustee. Such a list, while still broad in scope, helps to clarify some of the basic expectations of the student trustee and lessens overall role confusion.

91 Chait, 65.

92 Gale, 306.

93 Gale, 306.

94 Gale, 307.

System offices should contact student trustees immediately following their selection to schedule their orientation.⁹⁵ As with everything in the life of the student trustee, there is precious time to lose.

Assigning Mentors

Board mentors can provide student trustees with the necessary guidance to navigate their complicated role. The literature on trusteeship is clear that such mentors can “communicate informally and tactfully the board’s key norms, as well as answer any questions about the board’s operations that a recently appointed trustee might be reluctant to ask in a group setting.”⁹⁶ For their part, systems and institutions should strive to help the student trustees find a suitable mentor for their personalities, backgrounds, and board objectives. Connecting the student trustee with a mentor extends the formal orientation beyond the traditional one-day session and ensures on-going education about board function and role performance.⁹⁷

Opportunities for Professional Growth

The system or institution should support the student trustee in gaining institutional and role knowledge through ongoing travel and education. Whether coordinating campus visits or encouraging opportunities for professional development, the system should keep in mind that the student trustee has limited time to become acquainted with his or her role. Assisting the student trustee in organizing campus visits in a timely manner is essential to a smooth transition.

In addition, systems should grant student trustees the same opportunities to attend national conferences on higher education and trusteeship and other occasions for professional development that they afford traditional board members.

Compensation

The issue of compensation for board members has traditionally been controversial. While most of the literature on trusteeship states that the privilege of service is compensation enough for the time board members dedicate, it can

95 Gale, 308.

96 Chait, 55.

97 Meyerson, 77.

be argued that the student trustee is something of an exemption to the rule.⁹⁸ As school obligations interfere with earning a living, student trustee involvement often requires financial subsidies.

Of the student trustees surveyed 15, or 31 percent, received some kind of compensation in the form of tuition waivers or per diem stipends. Further, ten student trustees surveyed mentioned that not receiving compensation had proven financially difficult. The reasons given for the difficulty included having to take out additional student loans, the inability to have a part-time job, and unforeseen expenses such as cost of business clothes.

Additionally, although the vast majority of student trustees receive reimbursements for travel costs incurred, the current structure of students paying out of pocket and then being reimbursed can be especially challenging for students. While there is no obvious or easy solution to this dilemma, most student trustees did cite that the current structure is sometimes inconvenient. Many also stated that this was the burden they chose to take on when seeking the position and that the experience and networking benefits of serving on the board far outweighed any costs incurred.

Timeline of Selection

The amount of time between selection and official service on the board varies greatly system to system, sometimes ranging from as much as five months to as little as a day. This is due to a variety of factors including lags in the appointment process and timeline of election cycles. The danger of insufficient transition time can be seen in the case of a student trustee from the UW Board who found himself voting on multi-billion dollar budget items in his first meeting of the board.

Another common concern among student trustees who experienced little transition time between selection and swearing-in was the inability to shadow their predecessor prior to taking their place on the board. If they are appointed after at the conclusion of a predecessor's term, the new student trustee may never have the opportunity to meet with or learn from them on the job.

Considering the incredible time constraints the student trustee faces in "getting up to speed," it is recommended that this period between selection and swearing-in be expanded as much as possible to allow for greater and more effective transition time.

Strong Systems of Shared Governance Throughout

Effective student trusteeship relies heavily on strong traditions of shared governance throughout all levels of a system. From aiding in the selection and training of student trustees to ensuring effective channels of communication, consistent student support and involvement in shared governance is essential to an effective student trustee and thus an effective board. It is the system or institution's responsibility to ensure that these shared governance structures are effectual and representative.

The Great Debate: One or Two Years?

One of the most common debates in student trusteeship involves the issue of term length. Which is best: a one or a two-year term? According to the majority of the literature on trusteeship, it takes anywhere from one to three years for traditional members of the board to become adequately acquainted with the intricacies of academic trusteeship. Because of this lag, "governing board members are relatively less effective during the first few years of their tenure than they are in later years."⁹⁹ Even with extensive orientation and institutional support, "there are no shortcuts to a mastery of the 'feel' of the job and of the problems faced."¹⁰⁰

The student trustees interviewed were sensitive to the time constraints of the role. One argument in favor of a one-year term stated that it allowed for greater turnover in the position. This can be a positive aspect in that more students gain the opportunity to serve on the board and boards get the chance to see more students and experience a greater breadth of student perspective. It was acknowledged, however, that a one-year term did not allow the student trustee ample time to become acquainted with the role and perform effectively. On the other hand, two years can also be a serious time commitment and dissuade many undergraduates from applying for the position.

Despite the pros and cons of each, an overwhelming 80 percent of student trustees surveyed favored the two-year over the one-year model.

99 Tierney, 107.

100 Tead, 174.

Chapter 10

The Importance of Student Board Members

Public higher education has come under fire in past decades as taxpayers demand greater accountability, increased quality, and expanded services, all at a lower cost. As the public face of higher education, lay governing boards have been the subject of significant criticism. For instance, it has been speculated that these lay boards are out of touch and trustees “lack a basic understanding of higher education or commitment to it.”¹⁰¹ The profound history of citizen boards in American higher education makes significant reforms highly unlikely, though one solution for addressing the “irrelevant and out-of-touch” complaint already exists in one of the modern board’s most cherished characteristics: its dynamic range of membership.

As Duderstradt notes:

Nothing is more critical to the future success of higher education than improving the quality and performance of boards of trustees. Today during an era of rapid change, colleges and universities deserve governing boards comprised of members selected for their expertise and experience and who are capable of governing the university in ways that serve both the long term welfare of the institution as well as the more immediate interests of the various constituencies it serves.¹⁰²

The literature on academic trusteeship is saturated with references to utilizing the individual expertise of its members. The ideal balanced board includes members with varying backgrounds in areas such as business, law, education, and policy. The effective board, then, includes members who “imbue the group with authority and use trustees’ individual expertise, connections, judgment,

101 Duderstradt, 165.

102 Duderstradt, 165.

and interests in pursuit of collective goals.”¹⁰³ When selecting board members, executives and electors should select individuals “for their expertise related to the nature of higher education and the contemporary university and commitment to the welfare of the institution.”¹⁰⁴ They should be selected for their passion for the project; many boards suffer from languish, a lack of activity, and an unwillingness among members to activate and apply their own expertise. It should also be noted that many boards still fall victim to that aged board idea of the “white, wealthy older male,” inviting a range of race, gender, class and age that can only improve a Board’s cultural relevance.

It is not only the cultivation of modern perspective that makes the presence and effectiveness of the student trustee so essential to the contemporary board. The majority of the literature on trustees either do not mention students or only mention them in order to speak against their presence on boards, a number of the texts discuss the “absentee government” of a board that implements policy and “exercise[s] these powers without the consent of the governed.”¹⁰⁵ A resounding defense student trustees commonly cited was the fact that student trustees provide an essential modern perspective for the board.

As would be expected, the student trustees interviewed for this study were vehement in expressing their belief in the importance of the student trustee.

The final question of this study posed a simple inquiry: “Why is it important to have a student member on the board?” Many student trustees answered similarly: student trustees guarantee breadth, freshness, and diversity of perspective. Many stressed that because students are the consumers of higher education, they unequivocally should be represented at its highest policy making level.

As one student trustee put it, “The majority of the board went to college during the Cold War, used a record player, and had no idea what the internet was. To have folks set policy in a post-Cold War, post-digital age, when the internet is now on our phones not just on computers would be inept if all generations were not at the table.” Issues such as technology transfer, online education, nontraditional students, and course redesign all directly benefit from the unique perspective a young person can provide.

103 Chait, 65.

104 Duderstadt, 10.

105 Martorana, 45, 58.

Two statements made by current student trustees form the perfect argument for the importance of, inclusion, and empowerment of the student trustee.

The first addresses the unique student trustee perspective: “We [student trustees] are the only board members who see policy at both the 30,000 feet level of the board and the ground level of the campus.” Many times policymakers don’t have the opportunity to see policies come to fruition and how they affect their targeted demographic. Student trustees hold the unique position of being directly affected by the benefits and potential detriments of a board’s policy.

The second statement addresses the common argument against including a student trustee on a board or in decision-making because a student’s youth renders them incapable of understanding and effectively weighing many of the incredibly complicated and sensitive issues facing the modern board. Addressing those who criticize the qualifications of the student trustee, one student trustee proposed that the inclusion of a student is in fact the true test of the quality of an institution. “It is as if [they] are saying, ‘We will give you degrees to go out and do important things but we don’t trust you to vote on the direction of our university.’”

This sentiment is counter-intuitive to the mission of higher education and illustrates a lack of confidence in the quality of students a university is responsible for producing. For a board to imply that it does not have confidence in the very students it is accountable for educating is reprehensible at best. Student trusteeship, therefore, is a foremost example of the quality of an institution and ensures that a wealth of relevant perspectives is present and impactful when profound and long-lasting policy decisions are made.

Chapter 11

Nothing worth Doing ...

Serving as a trustee on an academic governing board is a serious responsibility and complicated endeavor. Especially for student trustees, it is compounded by difficulties ranging from role confusion to time constraints to struggles with effective communication. Despite being one of the most challenging experiences of a young person's life, serving on a board can also prove to be one of the most enriching. Current student trustees commented that serving on the board was "the experience of a lifetime," "the equivalent to master's degree in system management," and served as a "unique classroom of its own that equaled or surpassed my traditional education."

Perhaps the one constant in academic trusteeship is its invariable ability to dare and defy. Learning about the institution and one's self along the way is all a part of the indelible experience. It is riddled with complexity and controversy and is not a challenge to be taken without due consideration or "by those seeking easy or frequent public notice or acclaim"¹⁰⁶. The role of trustee "makes large demands on the time of many members of the board. It requires imagination and the occasional exercise of moral courage. No reward is attached to the job, except the consciousness of having performed an important public service."¹⁰⁷

It is that deep appreciation and passion for public service that draws many to the role of student trustee in the first place. The demands of such public service challenges us to constantly learn, grow, and embolden ourselves so that we may be more effective in our role. Passion, dedication, and a little bit of luck can go a long way.

106 Tead, Ordway. "College Trustees." *The Journal of Higher Education*. 22.4 (1951), 175

107 Martorana, 40.

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