THE BOARD AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY: FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Association of Governing Boards
Why a Focus Now on Student Learning?

- Tremendous Investments
- The Questioning of Value and Worth of Degrees
- Increased Focus on Accountability
...AND, FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS THE MYTH THAT AMERICAN EDUCATION HAS FALLEN BEHIND THE REST OF THE WORLD...
How Students (and Families) Feel

I’d like to return my degree. It’s just not working for me.

UNIVERSITY EXCHANGES
(c) 1993, Christopher Burke
A Twenty Year Problem?

...And, finally, I would like to address the myth that American education has fallen behind the rest of the world...

I'd like to return my degree. It's just not working for me.

© 1993!
Overseeing Educational Quality

The Role of the Board
The Board’s Role in the Oversight of Educational Quality (2011)

1. Develop board capacity for ensuring educational quality
2. Ensure policies and practices promote educational quality
3. Ensure learning is assessed, data are used, and improvements tracked
4. Approve and monitor necessary financial resources
5. Develop understanding of academic programs
6. Focus on total educational experience
7. Understand accreditation
Board (In)Sufficient Time on Student Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sufficient</th>
<th>Too much</th>
<th>Not enough</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>62%</td>
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2010
Time Spent: Money vs. Mission

Relative balance of time on academic and financial issues.

- Much more on finance/budgets: 57%
- Slightly more on finance/budgets: 22%
- Slightly more on academic issues: 3%
- Much more on academic issues: 2%
How has the board’s attention changed in the last five years?

- More attention now: 53%
- About the same: 31%
- Less attention now: 1%
- Don’t know: 15%
Impediments to Overseeing Learning

Impediments, if any, to the board’s understanding of student learning outcomes

- Lack of interest: 13%
- No impediments: 16%
- Not the Board's role: 22%
- Not enough time: 45%
- Other priorities: 64%
Comfort with Ed Quality

The Board

Board’s View of the Faculty
Two Drivers, Two Directions
Two Drivers, No Direction
One Doing the Heavy Lifting
Riding in Circles
Right Tools to Move Ahead
The Curriculum is the Faculty’s Responsibility…

The Board’s Role is to Remind Them of This Responsibility

- Ensure that the institution has an appropriate set of learning outcomes statements
- Ensure that efforts to determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning are in place and ongoing
- Ensure that institutions use the data they collect for improvement

Peter Ewell. Making the Grade. AGB
Key Board Questions: Our “Product”

- How good is our product?
- How good are we at producing our product?
- Are our customers satisfied?
- Do we have the right mix of products?
- Do we make the grade?

Source: Making the Grade: How Boards Can Ensure Academic Quality, Peter Ewell (AGB, 2012)
Improving Board Oversight of Educational Quality

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AGB Project:

- Drake University (IA)
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- Morgan State University (MD)
- Salem State University (MA)
- St. Olaf College (MN)
- Rhodes College (TN)
- Rochester Institute of Technology (NY)
- Valparaiso University (IN)
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Project Cornerstones

1. Metrics regarding student learning and educational quality

2. Institutional processes for educational quality and student learning

3. Board processes, practices, habits

4. Effective strategies for productive faculty and trustee relations
Early Returns

- Mission matters for metrics
- Definitions vary: student learning vs. academic quality
- To standardize or not to standardize
- Start with what you have; determine what you need
  - 16 different assessment tools
- It’s difficult and time-consuming work that requires intentional attention
  - Unfamiliar conversations
  - Limited foundation upon which to build
  - Challenge of rolling up

AGB
ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNING BOARDS OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES
Early Returns

- Know where the board thinks it is (and know where it really is)
- Engage meaningfully: “Risky showing ‘pounds of data’”
- Challenge to align elements:
  - Faculty work
  - Board meeting schedules
  - Accreditation reviews
Board Work: The *Process of Finding the Right Verbs and Subjects*

- Monitor
- Ensure
- Oversee
- Measure
- Evaluate
- Approve
- Facilitate
- Review
- Student learning
- Student success*
- Retention and completion
- Program quality
- Accreditation
- Academic planning
- Educational environment

* Placement; Personal Development; Civic Engagement; Social Mobility; Employer Satisfaction
9 Questions for Boards

- My institution/system has a well-defined set of student learning outcomes.

- My college/university/system gathers sound and useful evidence of those student learning outcomes.

- The board receives regular information about the achievement of student learning outcomes.
9 Questions for Boards

- I would be able to explain what “educational quality” means for this institution to a new board member.

- I view the oversight of educational quality as an important element of the board’s fiduciary role.

- The responsibility for educational quality is solely the faculty’s purview.
9 Questions for Boards

- Compared to other board agenda items, the board gives sufficient time and attention to the institution’s evidence of student learning outcomes.

- The board has appropriate processes in place to effectively oversee student learning outcomes.

- The board receives regular updates on decisions that the institution makes based on student learning outcomes assessment.
Mediocre vs. High Performing

**Mediocre**
- Over/Under-Engaged
- Not truly independent
- CEO “Owns” Agenda
- Avoids difficult discussions
- Meetings dominated by reports
- Never evaluates CEO
- Confuses philanthropy with good governance
- Never evaluates board performance
- Focuses on oversight
- Limited monitoring of board performance by board

**High Performing**
- Engaged and informed
- Forward/critical thinking
- Opportunity for meaningful deliberation (and appropriately skeptical)
- Creative and inquiring
- Applies risk assessment
- Collaborative partnership with CEO
- Focuses on strategy
Questions and Thoughts
Visit agb.org for resources on governance.

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