



## **Board of Trustees Retreat**

**Friday, September 29, 2017**

**8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (or until business concludes)  
Stevenson Union**

### **MINUTES**

#### **Call to Order and Preliminary Business**

Chair Thorndike called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the retreat.

The following trustees were present: Bill Thorndike, Lyn Hennion, Les AuCoin, Sheila Clough, Paul Nicholson, Daniel Santos, Teresa Sayre, Dennis Slattery, Joanna Steinman and Steve Vincent. The following trustees were absent: April Sevcik and Shea Washington. Trustee Linda Schott (ex officio) also attended the meeting.

Other meeting guests included: Kevin Reilly, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges; Steve Brown, The Bald Futurist; Shanztyn Nihipali, SOU student; and Sabrina Prud'homme, Board Secretary. Dr. Susan Walsh, Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs; Jason Catz, General Counsel; Janet Fratella, Vice President for Development; Marjorie Trueblood-Gamble, Director of Diversity and Inclusion; Mark Denney, Associate Vice President for Budget and Planning; Jeanne Stallman, Interim Director of Government Relations; and Kathy Park, Executive Assistant, attended portions of the retreat.

#### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **Retreat Overview**

The purpose of the retreat was to provide the opportunity for the board to think about the health and future of the university, as well as the function of the board both on and off campus. Retreat sessions focused on four major areas:

1. Considering the board's role beyond the boardroom.
2. Reviewing updates on important board-university operations.
3. Reflecting on strategic directions and preparing for next steps.
4. Acquainting or reacquainting trustees with tools to make trustees' work even easier.

During this time, the board attended various sessions of the retreat in SOU's Stevenson Union. Due to the non-linear nature of the trustees' discussions, the attached report serves as a record of the items discussed at the retreat.

## **The Board's Role Beyond the Board Room**

Facilitator, Dr. Kevin Reilly with the Association of University Governing Boards (AGB) introduced the board to The Guardian's Initiative (TGI), which is an AGB initiative to engage trustees of the nation's colleges and universities as advocates for the enduring societal value of higher education.

Nationally, higher education is quite a different enterprise from what it was when most university trustees and presidents went to college. A major indicator of that difference is the vastly changing nature of the student body itself: in terms of age, racial diversity, full time work status and first generation college students, and numbers of students nationwide. Additionally, America has been falling behind in terms of the percentage of its population with such postsecondary credentials, falling from first in the world to eleventh.

This is a trend we cannot abide, explained Dr. Reilly, if the United States is to remain economically prosperous and secure in the decades ahead in a globally competitive knowledge economy. Just at the time that we need a broader, deeper cut of diverse college graduates for jobs that increasingly require some college education, there seems to be a disconnect with the public about the value of higher education. Some 50,000 trustees across some 4,100 degree-granting institutions can respond to these circumstances as advocates helping students and the public to understand the personal and societal value of a college education. The Guardian's Initiative addresses areas of research and engagements to help boards do this work.

The board discussed its alignment with the Initiative and its willingness to engage in activities to promote higher education.

### Action Steps

- Dr. Reilly will provide trustees with a summary of the statistics he mentioned.
- Participation in TGI may be an ongoing discussion this year. President Schott and trustees will continue to explore ways in which SOU trustees might support the initiative in increase public trust and confidence in public higher education.

## **Reviewing Updates on Important Board-University Operations**

Trustees discussed the upcoming retirement of SOU's vice president for finance and administration. President Schott said that she is looking at resumes of the four finalists, one of which is internal. She will host the candidates for dinner at her home and Executive and Audit Committee members have been invited to join for those dinners. Board Secretary, Sabrina Prud'homme, who is a member of the search committee, added that trustees will have many opportunities to meet and interface with candidates: 1) the Finance and Administration Committee Chair, will meet with each of the four candidates over breakfasts; 2) trustees are invited to each of the open forums; 3) candidates and trustees will have dinners at the president's resident; and 4) April Sevcik is the board's representative on the search committee.

Ms. Prud'homme also offered an overview of the committee composition, the position description, characteristics of the applicant pool, and the timeline.

Trustee Nicholson said that in his work with Craig Morris, he always thinks about what the board's needs will be and brings that perspective to the conversation. It has been a terrific relationship with Mr. Morris, who has worked hard to restore faith in the financial side of SOU. He hopes the incoming person will be open to working with Mr. Morris who possesses a wealth of institutional knowledge.

Trustees also discussed upcoming 2018 board vacancies. Chair Thorndike introduced the item and said the board has to be ahead of the game to get people to apply or reapply for those seats. Additionally, it is important that the shared governance groups define their processes, get candidates vetted, and have them go through the [application] process as well. Ms. Prud'homme discussed the application timeline noting Thanksgiving as the advised deadline.

### **Reflecting on Strategic Directions and Preparing for Next Steps**

At length, President Schott recapped the strategic planning timeline, process, and progress to date. Presenting new information, she reviewed an early draft of the proposed strategic directions with trustees, and solicited trustees' feedback. Trustees expressed the following questions, concerns and commendations for consideration.

- Is it bold enough and are we emphasizing change sufficiently?
- The university must always think about brand and differentiation. Since every university will offer something a little different, SOU must think about tomorrow's learners and what will get them to want to come here.
- Traditional aged students will continue to come to SOU but we need to know more about what adults need.
- As with any economy, SOU must not lose sight of the consumer's perspective for price and thus, accessibility. At the end of the day, consumers believe it is a problem, and that concept may need to be weaved in more. If those working on the plan lose sight of it, SOU may lose its "customers." SOU will have to educate people and be part of the solution to fix that piece.
- The proposed directions are bold, but it is what we do with it next that really matters. That is where the necessary boldness will manifest itself.

President Schott discussed next steps in the process and informed the board that she will present the full plan for their approval in November.

### **Acquainting or Reacquainting Trustees with Tools to Make Trustees' Work Even Easier**

Due to the extended presentation and discussion regarding SOU's proposed strategic directions, trustees did not discuss this item.

### **Adjourn**

There being no further business, Chair Thorndike adjourned the retreat at approximately 4:05 p.m.

Date: January 19, 2018

Respectfully submitted by,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sabrina Prud'homme", written over a horizontal line.

Sabrina Prud'homme  
University Board Secretary