**Public Meeting Notice**

September 15, 2020

TO:        Southern Oregon University Board of Trustees

FROM:     Sabrina Prud'homme, University Board Secretary

RE:        Notice of Special Meeting (Retreat) of the Board of Trustees

The Southern Oregon University Board of Trustees will hold a board retreat on the date set forth below.

Discussion items at the retreat will include equity, diversity and inclusion; board culture; and the university business model.  The board also will act on a capital expenditure request for Taylor Hall.

Friday, September 18, 2020
8:45 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. (or until business concludes)
Visit governance.sou.edu for meeting materials.
Public viewing will be available on the campus of Southern Oregon University at the Hannon Library, Meese Room, 3rd Floor.

If special accommodations are required, please contact Kathy Park at (541) 552-8055 at least 24 hours in advance.

**Board of Trustees Retreat**

**September 18, 2020**
**8:45 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. (or until business concludes)**
**DeBoer Room, Hannon Library**

### AGENDA
Persons wishing to participate during the public comment period shall sign up at the meeting.
Please note: times are approximate and items may be taken out of order.

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| **1** | **Call to Order/Roll/Declaration of a Quorum** | |
| 1.1 | Welcome and opening remarks | Chair Paul Nicholson |
| 1.2 | Roll and Declaration of a Quorum | Sabrina Prud'homme, SOU, Board Secretary |
| 1.3 | Agenda Review | Chair Nicholson |
| **2** | **Information, Discussion, and Action Items** | |
| 3.1 | Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Training and Discussion | Lynnette Heard, AGB, Senior Consultant |
| 3.2 | Board Culture Discussion | Lynnette Heard |
| 3.3 | Taylor Hall Expenditure Authorization (Action) | Greg Perkinson |
| 3.4 | SOU Business Model Discussion | Greg Perkinson, SOU, Vice President for Finance and Administration; Josh Lovern, SOU, Budget Director; Jeanne Stallman, SOU, Associate Vice President for Government and Corporate Relations |
| **4** | **Adjournment** | Chair Nicholson |

# READ-AHEAD MATERIALS

(for context vs. use in retreat)

Lynnette M. Heard, Senior Consultant, AGB Consulting

Lynnette M. Heard, who was the first executive to hold this position in the organization's 44-year history, recently retired as the Executive Director of Board Relations and Secretary of the Board for the University of Cincinnati Foundation, which consists of 100-plus active and emeriti trustees. She brought extensive experience in higher education governance, compliance, strategic planning, and executive leadership. She solidified the governance and compliance protocols, led the board's first self-assessment, elevated the national presence of the Foundation among peer institutions, and successfully chartered and launched the Foundation's engagement and philanthropy legacy initiatives for former board members. With more than 30 years of experience in public and private sectors, she has served the president's offices at the University of Dayton and Wright State University as the executive director, board secretary, and assistant vice president of student affairs.

At the University of Dayton, she launched its nationally recognized inclusion, equity, and diversity programs and community partnerships meeting the needs of the region and the campus, aided in the development of an early college high school, and served as a lead facilitator for the institution's reaccreditation.

Previously, she served as the President & CEO of the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education, where she developed and delivered the regional consortium's strategic plan by leveraging scarce institutional resources, advanced collaboration and cooperation among diverse institutions, and improved student access to higher education for area community colleges and four-year public and private institutions. She enhanced the U.S. Air Force's student internship program with regional campuses, deepened the region's higher education economic impact, and significantly increased faculty and student development for nearly 30 campuses through intercollaborative agreements.
While at Wright State University, she served as the principal collaborative officer for the university's strategic plan, *Vision 2020,* and directed numerous community and media relations programs.

Nationally, she served as a board member for both the Board Professional staff of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges and the National Association of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education. Heard often serves as a coach and mentor for board professionals and as a project manager/ consultant/trainer/facilitator on public and media relations, community and program development, postcollegiate planning, strategic planning, protocol, leadership development, parliamentary procedure and other topics for myriad higher education and nonprofit organizations.
Born in Dayton, Ohio, Heard received a BS in Education from the University of Cincinnati and a master's degree in higher education administration from Wright State University in Dayton. In addition to completing postgraduate courses and advanced leadership and organizational development certificate programs, she is a certified parliamentarian.

# Why Boards Must Become Diversity Stewards

By  //  Volume 22, Number 3  //  May/June 2014

Our nation is debating issues of higher education diversity, inclusivity, and equity in the courts, the headlines, and public opinion. In everything from Supreme Court decisions related to affirmative action and gay marriage to differences in academic achievement and graduation rates by minority students, boards have a responsibility to lead. At AGB's National Conference on Trusteeship, Jeffrey L. Humber Jr., regional manager of public finance at PNC Financial Services Group and a board member at Gallaudet University and AGB, moderated a panel on diversity and equity. Jonathan Alger, president of James Madison University; Loretta Martinez, general counsel of Metropolitan State University of Denver; and Jeffrey Trammell, founder of Trammell and Co., tackled the key issues and discussed how boards can be effective stewards of diversity on their campuses.

**Jeffrey Humber: We're 50 years into this effort to bring greater diversity to our colleges and universities. How are we doing? Also, it seems as if the definition of diversity is broadening. How broad is your definition?**

**Jonathan Alger:** We have come a long way from institutions that were entirely white and entirely male in some cases—or in our case, entirely female—for much of our history. Yet we also have to look carefully program by program, because the numbers vary significantly from one to another, especially when it comes to gender representation.

One of the surprising realities in higher education right now is that one of the groups that arguably needs special attention is male students, and particularly male students from historically underrepresented groups. And while we continue to face challenges when it comes to race and gender, we don't want to forget about students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

The pipeline from K–12 institutions presents a big problem, too. Many students who come out of high schools are, frankly, not prepared to come to a place like James Madison. We would do them a disservice to admit them if they're not going to succeed. So what can we do about that? First, we can't just say, "Well, that's K–12's problem." We must figure out how we work together across institutional lines. It's one of the most important things all of our institutions can do. It starts with partnerships with community colleges and transfer agreements, but it goes much deeper than that.

For example, we have a "Professors in Residence Program" in which we target areas in Virginia where many underrepresented and disadvantaged students live. We send faculty members into middle schools and high schools to help students learn how to be prepared for college. We also have a lot of summer programs to bring young children to the campus to see what it's like to be in college and to engage in research and activities with our faculty members and students.

But we still felt we needed to go a step further and do something more systematic. So we've created a new program called "Valley Scholars" because we're starting in our own backyard in the Shenandoah Valley, although it would be great eventually to expand it even further if we can obtain more resources. Here's how it will work: We will identify first-generation students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds at the end of seventh grade and work with them, their parents, their teachers, and their guidance counselors for the next five years. We

will go into the schools, and we will also bring them onto our campus on many occasions throughout the year to help them become academically prepared. We will tell them that if they work with us and meet the admissions criteria at JMU, they will receive full-tuition scholarships at the end of the process.

I worked with other colleagues to help start a similar program when I was senior vice president and general counsel at Rutgers University, and it has been an enormous success. The first cohort of students in that program just graduated last year from high school, and virtually all of them went on to college. These are students from school districts where the dropout rates can exceed 50 percent, and the program has transformed entire communities. It's very resource-intensive to provide such programs and scholarships, but we're finding that many employers in the area can see the value of doing this program and how it can transform communities.

So we in higher education need to see diversity and equity as societal challenges and consider the roles that we can play in working across institutional lines. I think that's one of the most important things we must do.

# Jonathan Alger, president of James Madison University:

Why should we care about equity and diversity? I think a big question for all of us in higher education is: Are we going to be engines of opportunity for students of all backgrounds, or are we going to reinforce and exacerbate the inequalities that exist in society?

Diversity is a core value in our strategic plan at James Madison University. When we talk about it, we do not mean only race and gender. It includes people from all different socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, the LGBT community, first-generation students, veterans, and many others. We use a broad definition of diversity. Everybody has something to contribute, and we all have a lot to learn from and with each other.

When we think and talk about diversity and equity, we need to consider the various arguments for it. First, there's the *social and moral imperative*—the need to provide access to higher education for people who historically have not had it.

In addition, board members and other leaders talk quite a bit about an *economic imperative*: In the 21st century, if we're

going to remain competitive as a nation, our most important strategic resource is our diverse human capital—but only if we allow it to develop to its full potential. At JMU, some of the clearest and most helpful voices in talking about the importance of diversity and access have been alumni who are now employers competing in a global economy. They say they need our institution to produce graduates who understand how to work in diverse teams, to market to a diverse array of people, and so on.

The third argument, of course, is an *educational imperative*. When I was counsel at the University of Michigan, I worked on two well-known cases about affirmative action and admissions that went to the Supreme Court—they concerned whether race could be considered as one of many factors in the admissions process. The primary question in those cases was, "Is diversity a compelling interest because of its educational value for all students, majority and minority alike?" The Supreme Court found that, yes, diversity has educational value for all students; students learn when they can see differences within groups and similarities across group lines and overcome stereotypes through the face-to-face interaction that we can provide on our college campuses.

Yet despite all those imperatives—educational, economic, social, and moral—we still face many challenges to increasing diversity on our campuses.

At a public institution like James Madison, probably our top challenge as we try to think more about access and opportunity is financial. We know that if we had more resources, we could do a lot more. So, we are trying to raise more private money. We have a program called Centennial Scholars for low-income students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds (many of whom are first-generation college students), and much of the support is

private funding. We identify students with high academic potential and give them tutoring, mentoring, and other forms of academic and peer support because they may not have role models of family members who have gone to college. The result? These talented students are succeeding and graduating at even higher rates than the rest of our student body. If we had more money, we could support many more such disadvantaged and first-generation students.

We also face legal and political constraints. In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that diversity is a compelling interest in higher education, and that institutions can consider race as one among a number of factors in admissions. But at every turn, diversity efforts have faced legal and political backlash. In the last decade, we've continued to see ballot initiatives in a number of states that have forbidden the consideration of race or gender in admissions programs—for example, at public universities in states like California, Michigan, and Nebraska. In a recent ruling out of Michigan, the Supreme Court held that states can use such ballot initiatives to remove from the toolkits of public institutions the option of race and gender-conscious programs that foster diversity. We will have to see whether this latest decision spurs further such initiatives in other states.

To meet the imperatives of greater diversity on our campuses, I believe part of the message for boards and other higher education leaders is that we can't give up. We can't be afraid of risks. We can't be afraid of challenges, because they're there at every turn.

**Loretta Martinez:** Our institution is only 48 years old; it was established in 1965 with the intent of providing workforce education and training for our metropolitan area. Because of our youth, we have a different mentality—we don't have a history of exclusion over several hundred years. In fact, when it comes to providing access to underrepresented students, we are doing well.

But we aren't doing so well in ensuring that those students are academically successful and complete college. Part of that is financial, so, as a result, we're focusing a lot on the state

funding system. If we look at the districts that feed students to our institution, we see that they're still based on property taxes, so the haves get the most funding and the have-nots get the least. One of our main feeders is the Denver public school system, and a huge number of students there need remediation just to begin college.

As for our definition of "diversity," we have not gotten away from the term, but we now talk more about "inclusive excellence." We believe everybody comes from a culture and a background that needs to be respected and included in our environment. So we take a very broad perspective on that, and we're very attentive to—although not always successful about—issues of culture and experience.

## Loretta Martinez, general counsel and board secretary, Metropolitan State University of Denver:

When I think of diversity and equity, what comes to my mind is not just the opportunity gap that involves getting students into college. Once those students are in college, many students face what I call the achievement gap—they fail to succeed academically. At Metropolitan State University in Denver, we constantly work to close both gaps.

To close the opportunity gap, our board has overseen two major initiatives in the last seven years, the first of which has been deliberately to become a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Most HSIs exist because they are in a region where 25 percent or more of the population is Hispanic, and the process of enrolling is more passive. But that isn't the case for Metro State; we have had to actively work to recruit Hispanic students. In the past seven years, the percentage of our student body that is Hispanic has moved from about 12 percent to 20 percent. So our efforts seem to be working.

One of our other major initiatives was to deal with the issue of access for undocumented students. Colorado, like many states, tried unsuccessfully for years to legislate some type of DREAM Act. In 2011, after a decade of such legislation failing, our board of trustees, president, senior administrators, and faculty leadership said, "We're tired of waiting." We created a tuition

rate that was not an in-state tuition rate—that is a public benefit that can only be granted by the state legislature—but one that was affordable for undocumented students. Students enrolled, and the state and our sister institution realized nothing bad happened. Everybody else suddenly wanted in on it, and the legislators finally passed DREAM Act legislation in 2013. So now we've joined that group of states that allows undocumented students who meet certain criteria to be in-state students.

And once such students are here, we don't just let them sink or swim. We're also working on the achievement gap with the help of some institutional and national initiatives. We've been part of the Teagle project through the Association of Governing Boards to get our board focused on educational quality. (See the January/February 2014 issue of *Trusteeship* for more details on the project.) We're part of a consortium called Equity in Excellence that helps us look specifically at where the gaps are, how we should think about those gaps, and then how we should align our educational practices to meet goals that we've set to close those gaps. We're also advocating aggressively at the state and federal levels to change the way higher education is funded. We're probably the only Colorado institution that stepped forward on recent legislation to reorganize the Colorado system of funding to give more credit to institutions that have a high enrollment of students who are PELL eligible, first generation, or students of color. We're pushing hard, and it's not uncontroversial. But those are the types of internal and external efforts that the president, senior leadership, and ultimately our board have advocated to address the equity issue.

**Jeffrey B. Trammell:** I'm relatively pleased with the progress we've made at William & Mary, especially considering Virginia's past. Students of color have made up about one-third of the

entering freshman class in each of the last five years—although we can't take complete credit for it ourselves, as demographic changes in the state have had a lot to do with it.

We still have a problem especially with young men of color not wanting to have a stake in higher education—they don't see a future for themselves going down that path. It's also true for rural white men. Why do they not go to college at the rates we would like to see? Why are more women than men attending college? Why are we seeing these growing gaps right now? We have real challenges in terms of figuring out how we bring these fellow Americans into the university or community-college system in a way that gives them a chance to succeed.

I again go back to a single word that resonates with me when I think about my responsibilities as a former board chair: reality. We have to start by being honest about the problem. We can sit around all we want to and talk about the nuances of Supreme Court decisions, but the reality exists regardless. And that reality is that we need to get these young Americans into the educational system in a way they can succeed.

# Jeffrey B. Trammell, founder of Trammell and Co., former chair of the board of the College of William & Mary, and AGB board member:

I care passionately about equity and educational opportunity. To me, it is reality. I get into debates with people who say, "Oh, why do you support diversity?" My answer is, "Diversity is reality."

We have plenty of people who want to pretend the world is not as it is. They want to pretend that opportunity for everybody starts now with a snapshot of where we are today and that we don't stand on the shoulders of history.

I can take you right now to areas in rural north Florida where I grew up where it looks like it did right after the Civil War. Kids are running around with little opportunity and no path to success in life, and they are supposed to become freshmen at outstanding universities like everybody else. I can show you kids in inner cities or Appalachia who have no chance—not because of anything they did but because of history and society.

Yet we encounter people every day who say we should not take into account the factors that created situations where

people start in unequal places. Well, I'm sorry. Let's not pretend that we have a history of equal opportunity for everybody, because that is just not true.

As leaders of education, we have a responsibility to look broadly at how we provide opportunity for the young men and women of America so they have upward mobility and can achieve the American dream. That's our job. Our job is not to say we're going to limit our admissions only to the kids with the highest GPA and the highest test scores, and we don't care what their backgrounds are. We can do that, but it will not reflect the reality of the history of America. It will not reflect the reality that we are responsible for some kids not having an opportunity in our society because of laws that existed in the past, because of conditions that don't allow people to have full citizenship—people who are in the shadows through no fault of their own and need to have an opportunity to get a foot in the door.

So what do we, as board members and leaders of higher education, do today?

At William & Mary, we have tried to confront some of our past by studying it and why we excluded certain groups. We've developed courses for our students so they can learn about the actual history. On the admissions side, we have created "Gateway William & Mary" so students who come from households of $40,000 a year or less will have no debt when they graduate.

Last year, we also adopted the "William & Mary Promise," which came out of our five-year planning process. We realized that while public education is supposed to provide opportunity, roughly only 12 percent of our operating budget is now coming from the state. So with little prospect of the state subsidy returning to what it was, we decided to charge closer to what it actually costs to educate each student. And

for those who are less able to pay, we've developed a responsible financial-aid system to support them. The system that we as a board approved has allowed 71 percent of Virginia households to pay less to send their children to William & Mary.

All of that is to say that I believe that we, as trustees, have an obligation to change our financial-aid systems at our institutions, to review our admission programs, and to look carefully at what we do to meet the reality of the people who have been excluded as we embrace that core American value called upward mobility.

**Humber: What should boards do? What specific roles can they play?**

**Martinez:** At Metro, when we've taken some of these initiatives that I've described—for example, with reduced tuition for undocumented students—my president and I weren't the only ones involved at the institution. We received thousands of pieces of hate mail and the ire of our attorney general, legislators, and others. And our board was also embroiled in the situation and was called to account.

So the first thing I would say is that boards have to have courage, know the institution and what aligns with its mission, and understand and support the direction it wants to take with these issues.

Boards also need to ask more questions. They shouldn't just accept wholesale what the administration says. At the same time, while our board ultimately has had the final say on the initiatives that we have pursued, those initiatives haven't been top-down. They have bubbled up from people throughout the institutions. So boards need to listen to others at their institutions because those people not only see what's going on, but also have to educate whoever will implement any new programs.

**Alger:** Boards face other pressures that they often don't realize relate directly to diversity and equity. An example is the societal obsession with certain rankings and ratings, which may be based largely on criteria like standardized test scores that correlate heavily with socioeconomic status. That has been one of the biggest challenges in recent years, especially at selective institutions, because people become concerned about their institution's ranking when more disadvantaged students with lower scores enroll. Yet instead of fixating on certain rankings, we should be talking broadly about the quality of the institution and the inclusivity and access that we provide.

Every year around admissions time, institutions get many letters and phone calls saying, "Let Johnny in. Let Mary in." The applicants about whom such letters and phone calls are received often tend to be from pretty affluent backgrounds, since such individuals are more likely than others to have connections with people who are perceived to have potential clout. The challenge for administrators and board members is to think broadly and creatively about ways in which we and our institutions can reach out beyond our immediate social spheres to encourage and welcome students of all backgrounds, and to provide meaningful access for students who are less privileged.

**Trammell:** My advice to board members is to follow the Teddy Roosevelt model: Get in there and fight. Be bold. There is no reason to be a trustee if you just sit there for your term and watch the problems unfold.

If you don't try solutions, if you don't take a look at best practices at what's going on elsewhere and push for similar advances at your institutions, you're not doing your job as a board member. You have a responsibility to try to address some of these issues that we've been talking about.

# Diversity Questions for Boards

*By Marc A. Nivet and Anne C. Berlin*

Trustees may not feel properly equipped to navigate issues of diversity, but individuals within the governance structure can hold institutions accountable and stimulate constructive discussion by asking just a few key questions. This list is not comprehensive but should begin to illustrate how to put diversity stewardship in action.

**Are our diversity initiatives and investments tethered to clearly articulated institutional goals?**

Whether the goal is to increase campus diversity, raise high school graduation rates in the surrounding community, gin up interest in science and medicine among underrepresented minority undergraduate students, or cultivate a pipeline of women and minority faculty leaders, board members should be empowered to inquire into the overarching strategy of diversity interventions.

**What resources have been applied and what has been the return on investment?**

Another key line of questioning relates to the commitment of financial and human resources to diversity efforts in relation to their returns. Are diversity goals supported with adequate staffing and other resources? Are the funding streams for essential programs sustainable? Returns need not be financial in nature but also can be dividends of social and community benefit, or institutional trust and reputation.

**Are we applying metrics for success beyond compositional diversity?**

A focus on campus composition can perpetuate the notion that campus diversity is the institution's end goal. More salient questions for evaluating the success of diversity initiatives include:

- How many employees across different subpopulations and identity groups rate their managers as treating them fairly and inclusively?
- Is faculty engagement, satisfaction, and productivity consistent across all subpopulations and identity groups?
- Does the institution have mechanisms for cultivating a climate of fairness that combats favoritism and tokenism?
- Is the institution's educational approach working equally for students across all subpopulations and identity groups?
- Is the institution graduating students with the skill sets needed to succeed in a pluralistic society?
- Do potential new senior-executive hires demonstrate a capacity and aptitude for diversity and inclusion? In addition to questions about prior experience, qualifications, and vision, boards can make it a priority to identify senior leaders with training on unconscious bias and diversity.

*Marc A. Nivet is chief diversity officer at the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and serves on the board of trustees of the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions. Anne C. Berlin is a senior outreach specialist at the AAMC.*

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# Trustees Need to Address Racism

### BY KENNETH BEDELL

## A Campus without Racism?

Racism needs to be on the agenda of college and university trustees because integrity and sustainability can be threatened when resources have not been directed to create an anti-racism environment. Addressing racism is also an essential component of fulfilling the larger responsibility that higher education has to sustain and preserve American society and democracy.

The federal government requires that the board of trustees adopt and review statements of non-discrimination. As Brian Rosenberg pointed out in a 2016 *Trusteeship* article, "Enrolling a diverse student body, hiring a diverse group of faculty and staff members—these are necessary steps toward the goal of building diverse communities, but too often they are seen as ends in themselves."

Even with non-discrimination policies that are enforced, an institution of higher education can be disrupted by a racial incident. Looking at incidents over the last decades, in most cases, there were not policies, practices, or the intentional development of an anti-racist culture that adequately addressed racism. A contributing factor to this situation is that trustees have not established policies nor allocated resources that address racism directly.

Today, addressing racism is central to the purpose of higher education: to prepare students to participate in the economic, cultural, and political life of the nation. Providing an anti-racist environment and helping students develop anti-racist sensitivities and skills is part of preparing them for full participation as citizens.

## Imagining the Institution without Racism

Trustees work closely with the administration to develop plans for the physical plant and strategic plans to ensure institutional sustainability. The same energy and commitment should be applied to addressing racism. The best place to start is by developing a vision of what the institution would look like without racism. This vision will depend on the history and mission of the school.

It is important to develop this vision considering the perspectives of various stakeholders. For example, what would a school without racism look like to students of color? First, they would always feel safe: safe to express opinions, safe from being victimized by racial stereotypes, safe from experiencing barriers that white students do not experience, and safe when reporting instances of racial discrimination. Second, without racism, all students would experience their identity group being respected and celebrated. White culture, history, customs, and perspectives would not be presented as superior to all other perspectives.

Faculty and staff are also stakeholders who will be impacted by eliminating racism. Faculty and staff of color will have the same experience as students of color in being freed from the personal and collective burden of racism since they also experience racism as victims of stereotypes and institutional practices.

Only if trustees begin by developing a consensus about what the institutions would look like without racism can you ensure that every step that is taken to address racism is moving toward ending racism. A collective vision also makes it possible to evaluate policies or programs that are designed to address the needs of the institution, but may have an impact on the goal of eliminating racism.

The vision of an institution without racism will be different for every school. A public university has a commitment to provide an environment that is not only without racism, but also serves the needs of students that come from many different backgrounds. A faith-based college might articulate a vision that grows out of its historical roots.

Some institutions will have a vision that goes beyond eradicating racism from the experience of students, faculty, and staff. The vision might include that all graduates are prepared to live and work in the larger American society as advocates for a non-racist society. Other schools might include in the vision that a specialized department or research center would address the issues of racism in the larger society.

## Three Foundations of Racism

Going from vision to actuality requires identifying and implementing strategies. There are no quick fixes. Because racism is embedded so deeply in American society and institutions, there are many possible sources of resistance. Justifications that come from long-standing practices can sound like they are defending values of the institution. Yet, these practices may unconsciously preserve privileges for white people. Some obstacles can be anticipated while others will come as a surprise. If it were easy to root out racism, we would have come much further than we have as a nation in ending racism since the 1960s.

The three foundations of racism are (1) stereotypes, (2) institutional practices that disadvantage people of color—often delineated as institutional racism—and (3) the pervading ideology that white culture and people are normative and superior. Racism has structural, systematic, and institutional legs.

## Stereotypes

Negative stereotypes are assigned by white culture and then become justifications for

claiming white superiority and white privileges. Stereotypes are deeply embedded in American culture, and as social psychologists explain, they impact the behavior of both whites and people of color. Stereotypes are embedded in the conscious and unconscious minds of young people before they arrive at college.

The staff and faculty also have both conscious and unconscious biases based on stereotypes. One of the reasons that the last 50 years has seen so little progress in eradicating racism is that white people have learned to be polite while continuing to hold onto stereotypes. To end racism, stereotypes need to be addressed directly. There is no scientific evidence for stereotypes. It is not true that African Americans are good at sports and poor at academics. It is not true that Hispanic students are lazy and always late.

It is the role of higher education to teach students uncontested fundamentals. Therefore, colleges teach that the Earth is not flat, and all objects in a vacuum fall to the earth with the same acceleration. In the same way, a fundamental of human interaction is that stereotypes are not true. It has also been established by the science of racism that stereotypes impact the performance of non-white students. And stereotypes are a source of making students, faculty, and staff feel unsafe. Therefore, colleges and universities need to address directly the fact that stereotypes are not true.

Since the 1960s, institutions of all kinds, including institutions of higher education, have used cultural sensitivity training, anti-racism training, and other strategies to address the destructive impact of racism. It must be admitted that these strategies have only been modestly successful. Recent advances in racism studies and social psychology not only help us understand

why past strategies have had such limited impact, but they point to practices that are effective in combating stereotypes.

The key to combating stereotypes is understanding that the stereotypes are embedded in our unconscious minds. We are born with strategies for survival that evolved thousands of years ago. These include a preference for people who look like our parents, a fear of people who are not part of our family, and a desire for

> **The best place to start is by developing a vision of what the institution would look like without racism. This vision will depend on the history and mission of the school.**



human interaction. By the time we are about three years old, our social experience confirms the usefulness of these strategies. At that point, our brains mature by separating conscious from unconscious work. And our unconscious brain work is not available to us. While our unconscious mind is not available to us, it is possible to modify the power that it has over our actions and our thoughts. Working together, our conscious and unconscious minds can overcome the power of stereotypes.

This is accomplished by first learning to recognize stereotypes and our commitment to them. Then we can learn techniques that train our unconscious mind to give up the inherited preference for people like us and a fear of people who are different.

There is still much to learn about how to address stereotypes. Institutions of higher education that have taken seriously mitigating the power of stereotypes on their campuses have discovered that a program needs to be long term. A workshop during orientation or a day-long retreat does not give sufficient time for a program to be successful. Secondly, they have learned that a group process is important where students have opportunities to listen to each other as well as share their own feelings and experiences.

It is always important to consult with lawyers as specific responses are made to racist activity on the part of students or others. Because there is scientific evidence that stereotypes are not true, free speech that promotes white supremacy can be addressed in the context of academic freedom where the scientific evidence moderates the discussion. Harassment and hate crimes need to be dealt with through the legal system.

Trustees need to ensure that there are well designed anti-stereotype programs and that they are well resourced with budget and staff.

## Institutional Racism

Institutional racism has two expressions: (1) barriers for people of color that are not experienced by whites, and (2) privileges experienced by whites that do not extend to people of color. Racism is hidden in institutions and across our society in practice and policies that seem natural. The way we do things seems like common sense.

Addressing institutional racism and combating it requires that the institution develop two capacities. The first is the capacity to identify institutional racism. The second is the capacity to respond.

Because racism is so embedded in institutions, it is easy to overlook. And the same mental processes that support stereotypes

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generate rationale for established practices. Training students, faculty and staff to recognize institutional racism is called developing a "sense of racism." A sense of racism is like our sense of fairness or our sense of propriety.

After someone recognizes institutional racism, there needs to be a clear path for it be reported, evaluated, and corrected. Everyone needs to know how they can report institutional racism and the process for it to be reviewed. Trustees should always be informed of the progress in addressing institutional racism and actively engaged in reviewing policies that address racism.

Trustees can also play an important role by asking questions and developing a 'sense of racism' so that new and existing policies are run through a racism filter to evaluate the possible ways that practices and policies might impede progress toward the vision of a campus without racism.

Trustees need to ensure that there are sufficient resources dedicated to the training of administrators, faculty, staff, and students so that everyone on campus develops a sense of racism to identify institutional expressions of racism. Most importantly, trustees also need to provide resources to institutionalize the response to racism when it is identified.

At many institutions, dedicated staff will have responsibility for receiving and processing both anonymous and public reports where racism is identified. At other institutions, the responsibility for reporting racism will be distributed across various administrative offices.

Institutional racism can be particularly difficult to recognize and to root out. There are often strongly held justifications for practices and groups that do not want to change. An example that is reported in the literature about racism in higher education relates to one aspect of the tenure review process that has white privilege baked into it.

A stated goal of the tenure review process is that tenured faculty will be leaders in their field. The primary data is peer-reviewed research and participation in academic associations. What about a

> **Trustees need to ensure that there are sufficient resources dedicated to the training of administrators, faculty, staff, and students so that everyone on campus develops a sense of racism to identify institutional expressions of racism.**

candidate for tenure who has demonstrated leadership through participation in activist organizations, has published books and articles that make their own and others academic research available to a wide audience, and has demonstrated leadership that transforms individuals and organizations?

## Confronting White Superiority

Institutions of higher education play an important role in establishing the foundations that present and future generations have of what America stands for and what it means to be American. This is illustrated by what happened in the 18th century in the British colonies. A generation of young men were educated in institutions of higher education. Most of these institutions continue today with names like Harvard, William and Mary, St. John's, and Yale. There the revolution leaders read and discussed Cicero, Descartes, Hume, Locke, and others.

Higher education instilled in the founders the values of scientific inquiry and democracy. The colleges also instilled attitudes of white male superiority. They did not recognize or question sexism or racism. Higher education has evolved since the 1700s, but there are still ways that white male superiority is supported and preserved.

Every institution has its own history and context that require addressing white superiority. Two examples illustrate ways that trustees can initiate correcting the role of higher education in preserving the ideology of white supremacy: curriculum and history.

Without any malice or intent, the curriculum can support a perspective that white culture is normative and, therefore, superior. A department called Art History that

only has faculty members trained in European art history, a major in literature where it is possible to graduate with little exposure to non-white writers, and a required Western civilization course are all examples where the curriculum supports racism.

An approach that some institutions have used to address white supremacy is to investigate their history of involvement in slavery and support for racism. This provides a context for discussion and identifying remedial actions. It also can help clarify ways that the institution continues to support white supremacy.

Trustees can ask questions and provide resources for studies of curriculum and/or historical investigations. But more importantly, the trustees can encourage a culture where the institution recognizes its responsibility for identifying and eliminating support for the idea that white culture is superior to all other cultures.

## Opportunity and Responsibility

For more than 300 years, institutions of higher education have participated in the formation from generation to generation of the American character. Some institutions were founded as part of the abolition movement. Others were coeducational in a clear stand against sexism. But for the most part, higher education has been a conserving force that participated in the culture of racism. Trustees have an opportunity to face racism honestly and transform their institutions into anti-racism institutions.

Today addressing stereotypes, institutional racism, and the culture of white supremacy is not just an opportunity for any college or university board of trustees; it is the social responsibility of every board of trustees. ▪

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# HIGHER EDUCATION
## COORDINATING COMMISSION

# Oregon Equity Lens

**CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICE**

The Oregon Equity Lens was adopted by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) in 2014 as a cornerstone to the State's approach to education policy and budgeting. The Equity Lens was originally developed by and adopted by the former Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB), and is implemented by the Oregon Chief Education Office in addition to the HECC.

## Oregon Equity Lens: Preamble

In 2011, the Oregon Legislature created the Oregon Education Investment Board, which had a vision of educational equity and excellence for each and every child and learner in Oregon. The OEIB believed that we must ensure sufficient resource is available to guarantee student success, and that the success of every child and learner in Oregon is directly tied to the prosperity of all Oregonians. As the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, with our Oregon education partners, we continue this critical work started by the OEIB and reaffirm that the attainment of a quality education strengthens all Oregon communities and promotes prosperity, to the benefit of us all. It is through educational equity that Oregon will continue to be a wonderful place to live and make progress towards becoming a place of economic, technologic and cultural innovation.

Oregon faces many growing opportunity and systemic gaps that threaten our economic competitiveness and our capacity to innovate. The first is the persistent gap of student growth as measured by graduation rates, state assessments and daily attendance for our growing populations of communities of color, immigrants, migrants, and rural students navigating poverty. While students of color make up 35% of the educational pipeline in our state[1]— our opportunity and systemic gaps continue to persist. As our diversity grows and our ability to meet the needs and recognize the strengths of these students remains stagnant or declines—we limit the opportunity of everyone in Oregon. The persistent educational disparities have cost Oregon billions of dollars in lost economic output[1] and these losses are compounded every year we choose not to properly address these inequalities.

The second opportunity gap is one of disparity between Oregon and the rest of the United States. When the OEIB started this work, Oregon's achievement in state benchmarks had remained stagnant—and in some communities of color had declined—while other states had begun to, or had already surpassed, our statewide rankings. Disparities in educational attainment can translate into economic decline and a loss of competitive and creative capacity for our state. We believe that one of our most critical responsibilities going forward is to implement a set of concrete system changes and policies to deliver a truly student-centric education system that improves outcomes and opportunities for students across Oregon.

The primary focus of the equity lens is on race and ethnicity. While there continues to be a deep commitment to many other areas, we know that a focus on race by everyone connected to the educational milieu allows direct improvements in the other areas. We are committed to explicitly identifying disparities in education outcomes for the purpose of targeting areas for action, intervention and investment. We are simultaneously committed to identifying strengths in communities and promising practices in our educational systems.[2]

### Chief Education Office
## Vision Statement

Our vision is to build and coordinate a seamless system of education that meets the diverse learning needs of students from cradle to career, and ensures each student graduates high school with the support and opportunities to prosper.

### Higher Education Coordinating Commission
## Vision Statement

The State of Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is dedicated to fostering and sustaining the best, most rewarding pathways to opportunity and success for all Oregonians through an accessible, affordable and coordinated network for educational achievement beyond high school.

# Oregon Equity Lens: Beliefs

*We believe that everyone has the ability to learn and that we have an ethical and moral responsibility to ensure an education system that provides optimal learning environments that lead students to be prepared for their individual futures.*

*We believe that speaking a language other than English is an asset and that our education system must celebrate and enhance this ability alongside appropriate and culturally responsive support for English as a second language.*

*We believe students receiving special education services are an integral part of our educational responsibility and we must welcome the opportunity to be inclusive, make appropriate accommodations, and celebrate their assets. We must directly address the over-representation of children of color in special education and the under-representation in "talented and gifted."*

*We believe that the students who have previously been described as "at-risk," "underperforming," "under-represented," or minority actually represent Oregon's best opportunity to improve overall educational outcomes. We have many counties in rural and urban communities that already have populations of color that make up the majority. Our ability to meet the needs of this increasingly diverse population is a critical strategy for us to successfully reach our State education goals.*

*We believe that intentional and proven practices must be implemented to return out of school youth to the appropriate and culturally sustaining educational setting. We recognize that this will require us to challenge and change our current educational setting to be more culturally responsive, safe, and responsive to the significant number of elementary, middle, and high school students who are currently out of school. We must make our schools safe for every learner.*

*We believe that ending disparities and gaps in achievement begin in the delivery of quality Early Learner programs and culturally appropriate family engagement and support. This is not simply an expansion of services—it is a recognition that we need to provide services in a way that best meets the needs of our most diverse segment of the population—0-5 year olds and their families.*

*We believe that resource allocation demonstrates our priorities and our values and that we demonstrate our priorities and our commitment to rural communities, communities of color, English language learners, and out of school youth in the ways we allocate resources and make educational investments.*

*We believe that communities, parents, teachers, and community-based organizations have unique and important solutions to improving outcomes for our students and educational systems. Our work will only be successful if we are able to truly partner with the community, engage with respect, authentically listen, and have the courage to share decision-making, control, and resources.*

*We believe every learner should have access to information about a broad array of career opportunities and apprenticeships. These will show them multiple paths to employment yielding family-wage incomes without diminishing the responsibility to ensure that each learner is prepared with the requisite skills to make choices for their future.*

*We believe that our community colleges and university systems have a critical role in serving our diverse populations, rural communities, emerging bi-lingual students and students with disabilities. Our institutions of higher education, and the P-20 system, will truly offer the best educational experience when their campus faculty, staff and students reflect this state, its growing diversity and the ability for all of these populations to be educationally successful and ultimately employed.*

*We believe the rich history and culture of learners is a source of pride and an asset to embrace and celebrate.*

*Finally, we believe in the importance of supporting great teaching. Research is clear that "teachers are among the most powerful influences in (student) learning." [3] An equitable education system requires providing teachers with the tools and support to meet the needs of each student, and a dedicated effort to increase the culturally and linguistically diverse educators who reflect Oregon's rapidly changing student population.*

## Case for Equity

### Oregonians have a shared destiny.

Individuals within a community and communities within a larger society need the ability to shape their own present and future, and we believe that education is a fundamental aspect of Oregon's ability to thrive. Equity is both the means to educational success and an end that benefits us all. Equity requires the intentional examination of systemic policies and practices that, even if they have the appearance of fairness, may in effect serve to marginalize some and perpetuate disparities. Data are clear that Oregon demographics have been changing to provide rich diversity in race, ethnicity, and language.[4] Working toward equity requires an understanding of historical contexts and the active investment in changing social structures and practice over time to ensure that students from all communities have the opportunities and support to realize their full potential.

# Oregon Equity Lens: Purpose

**The purpose of the Equity Lens** is to clearly articulate the shared goals we have for our state, the intentional policies, investments and systemic change we will make to reach our goals of an equitable educational system, and to create clear accountability structures to ensure that we are actively making progress and correcting where there is not progress. As the Chief Education Office executes its charge to align and build a cradle to career education system and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission executes its charge to foster pathways for postsecondary success, an equity lens is useful to ensure every learner is adequately prepared by educators for meaningful contributions to society.

The Equity Lens confirms the importance of recognizing institutional and systemic barriers and discriminatory practices that have limited access and success for many students in the Oregon education system. The Equity Lens emphasizes historically underserved students, such as out of school youth, emerging bilingual students (English language learners), and students in some communities of color and some rural geographical locations, with a particular focus on racial equity. The result of creating a culture of equity will focus on the outcomes of academic proficiency, civic awareness, workplace literacy, and personal integrity. The system outcomes will focus on resource allocation, engagement, communications, data collection and analysis and educator hiring, preparation, and development.

# Oregon Equity Lens: Objectives

**By utilizing the Equity Lens**, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission aims to provide a common vocabulary and protocol for resource allocation, partnership, engagement, and strategic initiatives to support students and communities.

## The following questions will be considered for resource allocation and evaluating strategic investments:

1.  Who are the racial/ethnic and underserved groups affected? What is the potential impact of the resource allocation and strategic investment to these groups?

2.  Does the decision being made ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences? What is the impact on eliminating the opportunity gap?

3.  How does the investment or resource allocation advance opportunities for historically underserved students and communities?

4.  What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes? (e.g. mandated, political, emotional, financial, programmatic or managerial)

5.  How have you intentionally involved stakeholders who are also members of the communities affected by the strategic investment or resource allocation? How do you validate your assessment in (1), (2) and (3)?

6.  How will you modify or enhance your strategies to ensure each learner and communities' individual and cultural needs are met?

7.  How are you collecting data on race, ethnicity, and native language?

8.  What is your commitment to P-20 professional learning for equity? What resources are you allocating for training in cultural responsive instruction?

Creating a culture of equity requires monitoring, encouragement, resources, data, and opportunity. The HECC will apply the Equity Lens to policy recommendations, and internal, and external practices as education leaders.

# Oregon Equity Lens: Definitions

**Equity:** Equity in education is the notion that each and every learner will receive the necessary resources they need individually to thrive in Oregon's schools no matter what their national origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, differently abled, first language, or other distinguishing characteristic.

**Underserved Students:** Students whom systems have placed at risk because the systems have operationalized deficit-based thinking. Deficit thinking is the practice of having lower expectations for certain groups of people based on demographics or characteristics that they share. In doing so, an "at-risk" narrative is formed, in which students navigating poverty, culturally and linguistically diverse students, and/or historically underserved groups, and their families are pathologized and marginalized. This includes students who are treated differently because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, dis/ability, and geographic location. Many students are not served well in our education system because of the conscious and unconscious bias, stereotyping, and racism that is embedded within our current inequitable education system.

**Race:** Race is a social —not biological—construct. We understand the term "race" to mean a racial or ethnic group that is generally recognized in society and often by government. When referring to those groups, we often use the terminology "people of color" or "communities of color" (or a name of the specific racial and/or ethnic group) and "white." We also understand that racial and ethnic categories differ internationally, and that many local communities are international communities. In some societies, ethnic, religious and caste groups are oppressed and racialized. These dynamics can occur even when the oppressed group is numerically in the majority.

**White Privilege:** A term used to identify the privileges, opportunities, and gratuities offered by society to those who are white.

**Embedded Racial Inequality:** Embedded racial inequalities are also easily produced and reproduced—usually without the intention of doing so and without even a reference to race. These can be policies and practices that intentionally and unintentionally enable white privilege to be reinforced.

**40-40-20:** In 2011, the State of Oregon enacted legislation (ORS 350.014) creating the 40-40-20 educational attainment goal: that by 2025 all Oregonians will hold a high school diploma or equivalent, 40% of them will have an associate's degree or a meaningful postsecondary certificate, and 40% will hold a bachelor's degree or advanced degree.[5] 40-40-20 means representation of every student in Oregon, including students of color.

**Disproportionality:** Over-representation of students of color in areas that impact their access to educational attainment. This term is a statistical concept that actualizes the disparities across student groups.

**Opportunity Gap:** The lack of opportunity that many social groups face in our common quest for educational attainment and the shift of attention from the current overwhelming emphasis on schools in discussions of the opportunity gap to more fundamental questions about social and educational opportunity.[6]

**Culturally Responsive:** Recognize the diverse cultural characteristics of learners as assets. Culturally responsive teaching empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes.[7]

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate.
[2] Alliance for Excellent Education. (November 2011). T*he high cost of high school dropouts: What the nation pays for inadequate high schools.*
[3] Hattie, J. (2009), *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to student achievement.* P. 238.
[4] ODE (2016), *Oregon Statewide Report Card, 2015-16: An Annual Report to the Legislature on Oregon Public Schools.*
[5] *The Opportunity Gap* (2007). Edited by Carol DeShano da Silva, James Philip Huguley, Zenub Kakli, and Radhika Rao.
[6] The 40-40-20 statute was updated with the passage of HB 2311 (2017), refocusing it on students in the educational pipeline.
[7] Ladson-Billings, Gloria (2009- Second Edition, 1994). *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*; Gay, Geneva (2010). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice.* New York: Teachers College Press.
* *NOTE: The Equity Lens was edited in 2017 by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission with technical and data related updates.*

# Creating Inclusive Board Cultures

By Bethami A. Dobkin   //   Volume 27,  Number 2   //   March/April 2019

The board that embraces diversity, engages in meaningful dialogue and constructive debate, and cultivates an inclusive group culture will more likely benefit from the full experiences and knowledge of its members.

I recently met with the chief executive officer of a successful, privately owned company to discuss the possibility of his membership on my institution's board of trustees. The conversation turned to board development, diversity, and the mission of our institution. We discussed our mutual concern about the lack of diversity on the institution's board, and I raised the importance of self-awareness and fluency in talking about diversity and inclusion. He became introspective and began talking passionately about the eye-opening experience of attending a workshop on diversity with Robin DiAngelo, PhD, an educator and a consultant on racial and social justice. Because of this experience, he said, he was beginning to appreciate the significance of being a white male in a leadership role. He tried to share his learning and raise questions about the influence of racism and white privilege to the managers of his company at which point he experienced a minor rebellion. They were all high performers; there was nothing "wrong" with their culture. Why was he trying to change a perfectly good group dynamic?

The resistance this CEO experienced was arguably predictable. Such subjects as race, privilege, and implicit bias are most comfort-ably discussed at a distance, particularly by white leaders. Absent public campus controversies over issues of race, gender, or disability, trustees on higher education boards may not have the appetite or ability to address the ways in which various forms of diversity affect their governance, performance, or culture. No matter how much leaders may say they want diversity represented within their organizations, they haven't always created an inclusive culture that can reap the benefits of it. Achieving value from diversity requires an examination of board culture, a willingness to question traditional values and behaviors, and an intentional effort to build personal and organizational capacities for inclusion.

## REVIEWING THE CASE FOR DIVERSITY

Higher education is founded on such principles as the free exchange of ideas, civic engagement, and the advancement of knowledge through research and discovery. As such, diversity of thought and perspective, often described as individual difference, is easily embraced by campus communities and their boards.

Committing to diversity on the basis of such socially identifiable categories as race, gender, or age, can still be contentious for some boards, particularly without reviewing the various arguments about the way that this compositional diversity in member-ship can benefit their work. Ideally, trustees already recognize the value in membership that reflects the diversity of their student populations, which are increasingly made up of underserved populations, whether they be first-generation, disabled, or low-income students; students of color; or students who do not conform to binary definitions of gender. Some trustees may also see

diversity as an imperative driven by their institutional mission, or a necessity for improving decision making. For many boards, compositional diversity has become an inevitable fact, and the manner in which it is understood ranges from something to be managed, lest it disrupt existing expectations and practices, to an asset that broadens the range of perspectives and skills within the group.

High-performing boards recognize that compositional diversity is not only a visible marker of representation for various campus constituents, but also valuable for the perspectives gained from the lived experiences of members belonging to diverse, socially identifiable groups. Visible markers of identity—race, ethnicity, gender, and ability, for example—shape both how people are treated throughout their lives as well as their access to resources. I am aware that the language choices people use around me, the services they may or may not offer, and the expectations they have about how I should behave may all be influenced by their assumption that I am female. Although some trustees may recognize the limiting assumptions and behaviors that can be experienced based on a gender identity, they may not realize how successfully navigating these behaviors can build valuable skills and insights. In this way, compositional diversity adds more than a visibly notable change in group membership; it also adds to the diversity of thought that is more commonly valued in boards.

Perhaps your board has already built com-positional diversity and embraced heterogeneity as essential to innovative thinking and sound decision making. The business case for diversity is clear, not only from the perspectives of institutional reputation (campus constituents expect it), but also because of the higher level of performance characterized by diverse boards. (Ample research—ranging from that conducted by such corporate entities as McKinsey & Company to academic studies of group decision making—supports this conclusion.) You have recognized the importance of board members with varied social identities as bringing more than symbolic representation; you might have even included a commitment to or experience as a member of a marginalized group in part of your talent matrix for board member consideration. If you have intentionally and successfully recruited diverse trustees, you may have reached the point of critical mass: There are enough members from different identity groups (for example, one third of your members identify as women) that informal social networks can form. Now that you've achieved compositional diversity, how might you benefit from it? And if you're still struggling to recruit or retain diverse board members, what might you have overlooked about your board culture?

## THE ROLE OF CULTURE

A conversation with one of our alumnae illustrates the painful reality of the awkwardness by which some board members try to build diversity in their membership. As an Asian woman philanthropist, she is approached by many organizations as a potential board member. Recently she was told, "We'd love to have you serve on our board; you check many boxes for us." She agreed to serve because she supports the board's mission, but when asked to introduce herself to the group, she replied, "I'm here so you can check the boxes." Although she is a member, she has not contributed anything—in perspectives or financial support—to that organization.

If a board has yet to achieve diversity, it will need a culture that can go beyond tolerating, or even respecting, difference to one that knows how to productively involve the difference that diversity brings. If a board is already diverse, it will still need to cultivate the capacity for inclusion. Without an inclusive board culture, the benefits of diversity will be lost, and members will likely disengage, retreat, and become disillusioned with the institution.

Considerable research exists on the relationship between strategy and culture (including the well known quote by management consultant Peter Drucker, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast"), types of organizational cultures, and the influence of leadership styles in effective organizational change. Healthy cultures, for instance, can be described as including "explicit practices such as distributed influence, constructive dissent, transparency and confidentiality" (Richard Chait, "The Bedrock of Board Culture," *Trusteeship*, May/June 2016). These taxonomies and descriptions of culture provide objective distance for a board and may allow them to stay in the relatively safe space of describing themselves as "collegial," "open," or "tolerant." Furthermore, a board whose members embrace the deep assumption that trustees are effectively free agents or independent actors are unlikely to see a need for examining a culture that may be working at cross purposes with diversity and inclusion goals.

Creating an inclusive board culture begins with understanding both the formal and informal values, policies, norms, behaviors, and artifacts that establish the group's identity and environment. Various metaphors are commonly used to describe culture in which such formal, explicit markers of culture as bylaws, committee structures, and leadership roles are above the waterline, and deeply held values, informal practices, and interpersonal relationships are below the line. Cultures can also be described as concentric circles, beginning with individual assumptions and values, surrounded by interpersonal relationships, brought together as a team or group, embedded within an organization, and located in a broader regional or national context. No matter how complex the model, they all tend to identify various layers operating at once, call attention to the varying degree of awareness that individuals might have about those layers, and try to define the social and psychological environment that influences individual behavior.

Like other types of culture, board cultures are formed in part by the formal rules of engagement established in bylaws, policies, meeting agendas, and committee structures. These explicit "above the waterline" practices are often the easiest to change: for example, requiring the rotation of officers, soliciting broad input on meeting agendas, or checking the unconscious bias or biases that might lead to men chairing finance committees and women being asked to lead student affairs committees. The hidden, often informal markers of culture are less often noticed while also taking an insidious toll on new board members or those previously excluded from service. For instance, a board room may be adorned with portraits of past board chairs and presidents that are visible reminders of the institution's lack of diversity. A board retreat invitation might suggest "business casual" as appropriate attire, which makes far more sense to most men than women; "resort wear" is even more problematic for female board members. Some board members may routinely ask that support staff, who are more likely to be women or minorities, sit behind trustees in meetings rather than take open seats at the same table. Or finally, the trustee who is visibly different may often end up next to an empty seat, because other trustees, unconsciously or otherwise, seat themselves next to others who share their social identity.

These subtle behaviors exert influence before greetings are exchanged or a meeting is called to order. For long-standing, and often white trustees, each incident may seem like an isolated or random one, and certainly not something that deserves attention.

For members of previously excluded social groups, they are the backdrop against which more problematic behaviors take place, from microaggressions to overt discrimination. Combined, they create a culture that is at best chilly.

## CREATING AN INCLUSIVE BOARD CULTURE: RECOMMENDATIONS

The CEO with whom I recently met had laudable intentions in trying to bring awareness of race, power, and privilege to his management team. Leadership commitment is certainly one of the first steps in changing organizational culture. However, moving toward a culture of inclusion also requires an honest assessment of individual and group readiness for organizational change, consensus around group values, shared norms of behavior, and a commitment to developing cultural competence and humility.

### Readiness for organizational change

Often a precipitating event, such as a public scandal or lawsuit, can prompt a board to consider launching an organizational change effort. Just as planning for fiscal sustainability should take place before a financial crisis, boards should initiate assessment of their culture before external forces require it. Typical assessments include a review of the responsibilities of the board; its policies, procedures, and committee structures; and board performance as perceived by its members. Evaluation of board culture should, of course, include not just these explicit markers of culture, but also the less formal quality of relationships and participation among members. Who is granted the authority to speak, and why? Are decisions made by sub-groups or by means of side conversations? Is attendance equal across social identity groups? How does the group receive dissenting opinions?

Identifying the dominant culture of a group and the subtle ways in which that difference is contained or discouraged can be difficult without outside facilitation and investment in board development. Such tools as the Intercultural Development Inventory, which assesses "the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities," can provide a baseline for understanding the extent to which a group is ready to cultivate a culture of inclusion. Groundwork like this can help prepare a board for connecting the genuine desire for culture change to a realistic assessment of the work that might lie ahead.

### Consensus around group values

Board diversity statements and codes of conduct can easily be dismissed as ineffective and formulaic pronouncements. However, performance expectations set the standards for the behavior of a group, and explicit commitments to diversity and inclusion provide a framework by which expectations can be formed. Furthermore, board diversity statements signal to prospective members not only that the value of diversity has been discussed and embraced, but also that the board is willing to make a public commitment to that value.

Such statements range from expressing a desire for diverse membership to espousing policies and practices that foster equity and inclusion. Although boards sometimes adopt the diversity statements of their institutions as a show of support, they might also consider drafting statements specific to their responsibilities and then examine the extent to which those statements are consistent with the expressions of their constituents.

### Norms of behavior

As board members build relational connections and become increasingly comfortable and collegial with each other, the pressure to overlook or excuse implicit bias becomes greater. One of the most difficult behavioral changes to effect is the elimination of microaggressions. White board members may begin calling members of color the "model minorities" or begin subtly intruding on personal space—for example, moving in closely during conversation. Comments about women's hormones, offered in jest, may seem acceptable. The targets of such behaviors are at increased risk; as members of underrepresented groups attain higher status, the risk of their calling attention to disrespectful or discriminating behaviors directed at them increases. After all, they have garnered sufficient social, professional, and/or economic standing to be invited to serve as board members, and along the way they have likely experienced a lifetime of

challenges to their credibility and managed numerous implicit and explicit insults based on their identity. Regardless of their ability to succeed in such environments, microaggressions can have substantial impact; for example, women who experience them are three times as likely to think about leaving an organization (Bianca Barratt, "The Microagressions Still Prevalent in the Workplace," *Forbes*, October 28, 2018, citing the fourth annual Women in the Workplace report).

Comments informed by stereotypes, challenges to competency, and subtle acts of exclusion characterize many cultures, so their appearance as board norms should be unsurprising. Overcoming these deep cultural practices requires establishing new norms: for instance, introducing all members with their preferred names and pronouns, calling attention to their professional accomplishments, actively soliciting opinions from previously excluded board members, and explicitly recognizing the interests and expertise that make them valuable to the board. Perhaps most importantly, board members must be prepared and willing to intervene when witnessing peer behaviors that undermine a healthy and inclusive culture.

### *Cultural competence and humility*

Standards of good business practice are so ingrained in mainstream American culture that they are part of the invisible water of board culture in which we swim. And, as the CEO with whom I met was trying to explain to his managers, they are least visible to those who are privileged and white. Consider, for example, agendas with strict time allocations for topic areas, argumentation as the preferred mode of deliberation, and data defined as quantitative only are all examples of white culture. They all may be very valuable cultural norms, but without identifying them as examples of culture, there is no opportunity for assessment of them. Building inclusive cultures requires not just knowledge about cultural variations; it requires cultural humility, or the willingness to examine one's own cultural biases, learn about the perspective of others, and be open to change based on new knowledge. Once board members embrace cultural humility, self-awareness and cultural competence can follow.

Perhaps most importantly, inclusive boards have members who can lead others in directing them to resources for self-understanding, such as workshops, readings, or tools on implicit bias (for example, Project Implicit); model cultural competency (for example, use "I" statements, listen to learn rather than respond, accept conflicts, admit mistakes); and gently but effectively intervene when other members slip into microaggressions. This last area can be the most difficult but is no less important. Minority board members cannot be expected to move seats around a table or address inappropriate comments; all board members share this responsibility.

The board that invests in understanding personal biases and cultivating an inclusive group culture is building the capacity for recruiting, retaining, and benefiting from a diverse membership. Bring diverse members to the board table, encourage them to speak, and be prepared to listen.

# High-Performance Governance is All About the Quality of the Questions Asked

By William Donaldson and Joseph G. Burke   //   Volume 28,  Number 1  //   January/February 2020

Over the past 50 years we have served on or consulted with academic or business governing boards in the public and private, and profit and nonprofit sectors in both the United States and international arenas. Throughout our many governing experiences we have found that the ability to ask the most consequential questions about strategic institutional issues is the major characteristic of high-performance governance. Today it is critical for boards to do the following:

- Identify the growing importance of this governing skill;
- Describe the basic components of effective strategic questioning; and
- Suggest best practices that boards can use to improve capacity within this area.

## The Growing Importance of Strategic Questioning

We are living in a world of increasingly rapid change and uncertainty. Our society is growing more diverse, divided, and difficult to govern. We are seeing fundamental shifts in demographics, politics, economies, technologies, and cultures. Rapidly improving technologies are creating new markets, industries, and job skills. These revolutionary shifts have resulted in significant changes in our higher education outcomes, delivery systems, structures, and systems.

We have seen several new kinds of disruptions to the higher education landscape:

- Increasingly diverse student demographics, changing student educational and support needs and expectations, expanding academic program and delivery systems, and emerging competitors;
- The development of larger and more complex educational institutions; and
- Rising institutional costs (especially in the traditional delivery models) that are causing society to ask fundamental questions about the role and the value proposition of its offerings.

Yet new economic models (including spiraling discount rates) are putting downward pressure on net tuition rates per student. At the same time, student expectations for faculty access, instructional excellence, and student services expansions are increasing. These conflicting pressures and trends are putting great institutional burdens on administrators, and ultimately on the doorstep of the governing boards.

During these increasingly challenging times, governing boards are called upon to assume new and groundbreaking roles. They are challenged to move beyond the traditional roles of

oversight and simple approval of administration proposals. They are also being called upon to collaborate with the administration in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the institution, and the academic excellence of the curriculum, and to support the health and welfare of the student body. Finally, they are being called upon to challenge outdated assumptions and strategies, and revise the governance climate to one of openness, transparency, flexibility, and innovation. In short, they are being called upon to focus their attention on the strategic direction and goals of the institution.

This is requiring substantial revisions to outmoded structures, cultures, and processes of board governance. Boards are searching for ways to become more engaged and more resolute in seeking answers to current challenges and taking advantage of new opportunities presented by the changing world environment. Administrators are seeking to become more transparent and open to the probing questions of the board, and boards will need to become more effective in asking these types of questions.

This skill we call "strategic questioning."

## What is Strategic Questioning?

Strategic questioning is the capacity to ask questions that most affect the strategic future of a higher education institution.

**What to Ask:** Here are some of the major question categories that boards might recommend:
- Issues that directly affect the long-term sustainability of the institution and the excellence of its programs;
- Issues that affect the successful accomplishment of the strategic plan's goals and strategies;
- Issues that affect the security, safety, health, and welfare of students or employees; and
- Issues that deal with academic, financial, enrollment, facility, employment, retention, graduation, and demographic trends.

**Who to Ask:** We suggest:
- If possible, consider asking your question prior to the meeting to either an appropriate committee chair/staff member. If they do not know the answer, ask the board chair or president. This could save time during a board meeting or give the staff time to find an answer.
- If the above strategy is not feasible, ask your question during the board meeting. If the answer will require more research and analysis, ask that further discussion be deferred. It is far more effective and efficient to take the question, gather relevant data, research and discuss alternative policy solutions, and bring it back to the board when you have the required background data and recommendations ready for board decision or discussion.

**When to Ask:** This question is closely related to the "who" question above. Our experience demonstrates that the ideal time to raise strategically important questions is prior to a board meeting, and if possible, during or prior to, relevant committee meetings. This allows sufficient time for data gathering, analysis, discussion, and proposal development. It also helps board meetings run more effectively and efficiently. Board leaders and administrators have time to gather data, conduct analysis, and prepare the board to engage in meaningful discussion.

**How to Ask:** We suggest that board members ask questions in a spirit of mutual respect and in an honest attempt to learn. Do not attempt to cast fault or ask your questions in an accusatory fashion. Remember you are working together with the administration as partners. If possible, ask questions that are performance critical in a private setting (at least until you are sure that you have all the correct facts).

Taken together, these four questions are meant to identify the basic components of what makes for effective strategic questioning.

## The First Step: Setting the Board Strategic Agenda

To carve out the necessary time and energy to concentrate on strategic issues, a board must first identify the most consequential issues facing the institution. The institutional strategic plan identifies key goals that the institution must address within the immediate future to ensure its long-term sustainability. Therefore, to set the stage for a board and its members to focus attention on strategic issues, we recommend that the board start each year with a general discussion of the following questions:

- What actions must our institution focus on in the year ahead in order to accomplish our institutional strategic goals?
- What unique experiences, skills, and capabilities does our board have that has the greatest potential to help our institution achieve these strategic goals over the next year?
- What two to four annual board goals should we establish for the year ahead that will enable us to focus on the most consequential issues affecting the long-term success and sustainability of our institution?

Once these critical questions are answered, board leadership should assign these goals to appropriate committees. The committees will then work with their administration counterparts to identify the key questions and issues to be addressed, gather and analyze the required data, and develop and review recommendations for board review, discussion, and decision.

These initial board planning actions are steps to establishing a foundation from which strategic questioning can flourish.

## Other Governing Best Practices in Enhancing Strategic Questioning Skills

Other effective ways boards can enhance member questioning skills include the following:

- During orientation of new board members, include an initial introduction to the importance to good governance of knowing to ask questions that most affect the strategic future of a higher education institution;
- Having the board chair begin each year with a reemphasis of a governing culture that emphasizes a strategic focus, encourages strategic questioning by all trustees, and values multiple perspectives, and welcomes consideration of alternatives approaches, strategies, and solutions; and
- Incorporating into the board's annual assessment process questions regarding how well the board has performed in this area and what it can do to improve upon this skill during the next year.

New members can rapidly gain strategic questioning skills during their orientation by quickly learning the importance within their board culture of focusing on strategic issues and thinking, and the value of considering multiple perspectives and approaches. These areas should be addressed in addition to the governance expectations of roles, value added, organizational fit, and behavioral guidelines. A final set of orientation activities might include a basic introduction to the institutional mission, values, organizational structure, leadership, and current and future challenges and opportunities.

Each year the board chair should reemphasize the cultural importance of these same skills, as well as the commitment of the president and chair to be open to alternative perspectives,

approaches, and hard questions. During these annual sessions, examples of effective and productive strategic questions taken from recent board meetings might be provided or solicited. This will help members better understand this skill.

Finally, we suggest that you include in your annual board assessment review questions regarding how well your board has performed in this area, and what you can do to improve this skill during the next year.

Boards that follow these suggestions over a few annual cycles will find that the board's strategic focus capacity, as well as that of individual members to ask insightful and strategic questions will be greatly improved. This improvement will reap benefits across the governance domain. It will result in more effective institutional problem solving, leadership, visioning, and policymaking. It will also result in more widespread board engagement as members will be encouraged to express their own thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and perspectives. This will all lead to better board decisions, strategic direction, and long-term sustainability and educational excellence.

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## Takeaways

- The ability to ask the most consequential questions about strategic institutional issues is the major characteristic of high-performance governance. It is critical for boards to identify the importance of this skill, be able to describe to basic components of effective strategic questioning and suggest best practices to improve this skill.
- As the landscape of higher education changes with a more diverse student demographic, a change in the needs and expectations of students, and an expanding variety of academic programs, the costs of education are continuing to rise making society question the value of higher education. These factors are causing governing boards to take on new roles and responsibilities. One of these new roles is being able to ask administrators more probing questions.
- Strategic questions are questions that most affect the strategic future of an institution. Before asking the questions, boards must identify the most consequential issues facing their institution and the key goals that the institution wants to address to ensure long-term stability. Asking these questions and engaging in strategic thinking will lead to better board decisions and long-term effects for the institution.

# The 10 Habits of Highly Effective Boards

By  //  Volume 22, Number 2  //  March/April 2014

Most boards of colleges and universities don't reach their fullest potential for effective governance. In fact, many may suffer from boardroom dysfunctions that might not be fully apparent. Yet now, more than ever, boards need to strive toward a higher level of performance. Today's challenges and expectations demand nothing less.

Policy makers, corporate leaders, accreditors, and others are asking much more of higher education and increasingly questioning its quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. They are at the ready to offer advice, comments, and critiques; leverage their influence; and expand their oversight in order to ensure that higher education institutions are achieving their missions and meeting their public purposes. Calls for increased accountability demand a greater degree of transparency, trust, and independence—as well as a boldness that only comes from a smarter and more focused level of engagement by boards and true collaboration with college and university administrators. Getting governance right calls for boards to hit their own "refresh" button as they adapt to changing expectations.

Boards are made up of successful leaders, mostly from outside the academy, who need to respect the culture of the institution they serve. At the same time, they must also recognize that the pace of change requires a new level of fiduciary engagement. In an environment of constant challenges, boards must move to "strategic governance"—which means, primarily, forming a far more robust partnership with institutional leaders.

In fact, the success of any college or university ultimately depends on an effective working relationship between the board and the president. Unfortunately, that relationship has grown strained at too many institutions. In a number of conversations recently, I've sensed the increased pressures of leadership and the related tensions that often result between chief executive officers and their governing bodies. Whether in the traditional areas of board oversight or in other, more expansive aspects of board engagement, we at the Association of Governing Boards see boards asking more questions and presidents wondering whether the line between policy and administration has become so frayed that it has largely disappeared. Voluntary boards can't and shouldn't be trying to manage the complex structures and issues of higher education. At the same time, however, presidents and chancellors shouldn't be seeking to limit board involvement in the strategic challenges confronting their institutions. The stakes for higher education today are too high, and boards, which hold ultimate authority, should expect to be full partners.

The truth is that presidents can't succeed in a vacuum, and visionary leadership requires support as well as a sense of partnership—between the board and the president, and with the participation of faculty members and other key stakeholders—to meet institutional goals. Higher education is grappling with some fundamental shifts that require new, entrepreneurial thinking. How that plays out in the boardroom requires a willingness on the part of boards to take, and administrators to welcome, a fresh look at how governance is implemented.

The men and women who serve on a college, university, or system governing boards would do well to recognize that they must collaborate with and support campus administrators in order for their institution to achieve its mission and succeed. For their part, presidents and

chancellors, who depend on board support, must recognize that we are in a moment (one that is unlikely to change any time soon) when board members will assert their thoughts and expectations. A new standard of board engagement—reflected through broader awareness, curiosity, imagination, and input—will enable boards to meet the realities of reduced state support for public institutions, tuition and other revenue challenges at all institutions, and new and disruptive approaches to delivering an academic program. Boards will be better positioned to consider and assess risk. And, they will come to understand that their most essential value during these times of change may be as the story tellers of their institution's mission, value, and impact.

The goal is to make this higher level of board engagement work—for the students who expect our institutions to meet their needs, for policy makers who want to be sure that the public's investment in higher education is providing collective societal benefits, and for others among our stakeholder groups who care about the product that we offer.

# The Art of Getting Governance Right

High performance should be the goal of the governing bodies of all institutions and systems. So, how can boards become more effective? AGB's National Commission on College and University Board Governance, under the leadership of former Governor Philip N. Bredesen (D-TN), is working to ensure that boards have the capacity and awareness to meet their responsibilities in an era that often calls for answers to challenging problems. We will share the commission's recommendations this fall.

In the meantime, based on my experience of more than 30 years working with boards and their institutions, I'd like to share a list of 10 characteristics and habits that I believe meet the test of strategic governance through high performance. High-performing boards:

# 1. Create a Culture of Inclusion

The importance of board culture shouldn't be overlooked by boards committed to making a difference. Highly effective boards have a culture of engagement built upon a commitment to inquiry—knowing that it is better to ask the hard questions within the structure of the board's meetings than to publicly critique board decisions after the fact. Establishing a culture within the board that facilitates the kind of strategic consideration and decisions so essential for the times requires that all important issues be put on the table and that all board members become aware of those issues. Such a culture relies upon a structure that encourages smart engagement—based on dashboards, metrics, and other meaningful data that inform decisions and provide transparency—especially between the board and the administration.

Strategic governance works best when boards understand the business of higher education and the stakes involved. That requires a commitment to what matters most: the priorities of the business model in an environment where revenue and expense decisions are increasingly uncertain, strategies for teaching and learning are changing quickly, and the public's trust in higher education is eroding and must be reclaimed.

# 2. Uphold Basic Fiduciary Principles

The legal expectations of the duties of care, loyalty, and obedience are the essentials of board responsibility. Board members should be aware of what each principle requires of them as

individual trustees as well as part of the board as a whole, and how those principles relate to the hard work of serving on a governing body of a college or university. Those basic principles should, along with more specific institutional issues and priorities, frame the board's orientation program. They reinforce that the board is accountable for the reputation and independence of the institution it serves.

The principles call upon boards to recognize that they hold ultimate authority and should act both independently and prudently in making policy decisions and meeting their responsibilities. Board members should be informed about, and focus their actions on, what is in the best interests of their college or university. The institution and its mission and needs—not the interests of any other party and especially not a board member's personal interests—should inform the decisions of the full board.

Certainly, individuals who are appointed or elected to boards of public institutions have a responsibility to meet state interests and broader statewide agendas; serving the public interest is always an element of a board's fiduciary responsibility. However, loyalty and commitment to institutional priorities and interests should remain paramount.

The fundamental fiduciary principles also serve to remind board members that the parameters of their voluntary commitment are not unlike the decision-making standards of corporate law: Members should not presume any individual authority to make policy decisions. Asking the hard questions, demonstrating periodic skepticism when merited, and even expressing strong and dissenting views are all appropriate and welcome elements of board-member engagement. Yet the board acting as a whole must make the final decisions and meet its fiduciary responsibility to hold the institution in trust. Boards should enforce a process of principled discipline when one of their members presumes a level of personal authority to which fiduciary authority does not extend.

# 3. Cultivate a Healthy Relationship with the President

Today, we need boards and presidents to work actively to establish a strong working relationship—again, perhaps the most fundamental element of achieving a higher level of board performance. Strategic governance is about the board as a "thought partner" with the chief executive.

Many presidents, however overwhelmed by the nature of today's expectations, express concerns that their board is less a partner and more a hindrance. Yet, policy makers and an increasingly skeptical public are demanding that presidents be inclusive in addressing today's difficult challenges. I go back to my opening comments: Successful institutional leaders are those who meaningfully involve their governing body so that it is in the best position to offer full support, help frame bold decisions, and then advocate on the institution's behalf with the public.

That said, boards that are most effective understand the scope and the limits of their responsibilities. Thomas Jefferson referred to board members of his beloved University of Virginia as "visitors." His was a healthy reminder that board members must be smart in balancing their interest, engagement, and authority—their role in oversight and policy setting—with a clear understanding that the actual management of the institution should be left to its top administrators.

Effective boards, while strategically engaged, will look to the CEO to set a course and establish a vision. Ultimately the objective of strategic governance is to achieve a level of mutual objectives, but effective boards must put a high degree of trust in the leadership they selected with the expectation that strategic goals will be achieved.

It is a balancing act: Boards should enhance engagement in the areas where they must participate and be accountable for overall outcomes, while also supporting strong presidential leadership.

# 4. Select an Effective Board Chair

Board chairs are selected for a variety of reasons: stature, trust, leadership skills, external connections, length of service, gubernatorial influence, personal philanthropy, and others. But such criteria may not be what's needed in this era of constant change. A high-performing board requires a leader who can support and facilitate a model of strategic governance, develop an essential and candid relationship with the chief executive officer, have the respect of his or her board colleagues, understand and respect academic culture, and ensure that the full board is focused on issues that matter.

The board chair and president must have a relationship that allows for candor yet is also mutually supportive. The specific traits of a board chair of a highly effective board include:

- A sense of partnership with the chief executive;
- Experience leading voluntary boards of complex organizations;
- An understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the institution;
- A willingness to focus the board and its members on issues that matter rather than those that are neither the province of the board nor necessarily the most important strategic challenges;
- A familiarity with the interests of the institution's internal and external stakeholders, and the ability to represent the board to those groups; and
- A readiness to be the voice of the board as both an advocate and a storyteller to key external constituents, in coordination with institutional leadership.

# 5. Establish a Strong Governance Committee

As state and federal policy makers, accreditors, and external critics shine a spotlight on board governance and accountability, it is essential that boards own the oversight of their own performance. Today's board committee structures require an active governance committee that oversees effective board governance, whether at a private institution, public institution, or system.

While boards of public institutions are likely to have less direct influence on new board appointments, they, like their private-institution peers, should delegate oversight of board effectiveness to a governance committee. No other board committee is as essential to overall board structure and accountability as this one. And, the selection of the governance committee's chair should be no less important than the selection of the chair of the board. Done correctly, the governance committee can have an enormous impact on strategic governance and improve board performance significantly.

Boards must monitor their own overall performance and take seriously the behavior and ethics of their members. High-performing boards ensure that institutional policies about trustee

responsibilities, ethical behavior, and conflicts of interest are current and enforced. An active governance committee should monitor and act upon any lapses.

Related to the work of the governance committee is a focus on building the board that is needed to meet an institution's current priorities. Boards that can influence board appointments (mostly those at independent institutions) should focus on breadth of expertise and commitment among the people being considered to serve on the board. Carefully and intentionally building a board profile with a mix of skills and expertise, and developing future board leadership from among respected and knowledgeable board members, can make a significant difference to a board's ability to achieve a higher level of performance.

Public and private boards should be sure that their makeup addresses the full breadth of expertise necessary to contribute to the strategic issues confronting institutions. Including men and women on the board who understand the business of the academy should be a priority.

# 6. Delegate Appropriate Decision-Making Authority to Committees

Boards that engage in strategic governance allocate a span of policy-making authority to standing committees while enabling the full board to focus on more strategic issues. Boards should trust that committees will do important work and have a substantial ability to present action decisions and recommendations that are fully vetted.

Committee agendas should focus on issues that matter to the strategic direction of the institution; committee meetings that are repetitive and committees with overly restricted authority invite limited engagement and interest. Rather than structure committee meetings merely to receive staff reports, administrators and committee chairs should work together to frame strategic agendas.

How often should the full board meet? Enough meetings should be scheduled to adequately address the business of the institution and the board, and to meet public expectations. Boards of independent institutions that meet fewer than four times each year plus a periodic retreat are likely going to underperform. Boards of public institutions that meet almost monthly may be overdoing their oversight responsibility and ultimately diminishing their effectiveness, while limiting the capacity of the administration to lead with confidence. It should also be noted that substituting executive committee meetings for full board meetings as a pro forma process, while perhaps facilitating decision making, will send signals that will lead to limited interest and engagement among board members. It is also less likely to lead to the level of performance and collaboration that is essential for today's expectations for board accountability.

# 7. Consider Strategic Risk Factors

Effective boards should look at key challenges through the prism of "risk." Enterprise risk management (ERM), a common business practice used by many board members in their day jobs, facilitates a smart model of decision making for boards. The process of assessing risk factors and making policy decisions based upon them allows boards to ask questions and make choices in collaboration with senior administrators in line with the level of risk tolerance that the institution might have concerning a specific initiative. That can include anything from

investing in change by accepting the upside of a bold initiative to mitigating threats or avoiding some initiatives that might run too high a risk to the business model.

# 8. Provide Appropriate Oversight of Academic Quality

In *Making the Grade: How Boards Can Ensure Academic Quality* (AGB Press, 2nd Edition, 2012), Peter T. Ewell says that a board's oversight of the academic quality and outcomes of an insitution is as important as oversight of its fiscal conditions. AGB board chair Jim Geringer often reminds boards that they are responsible for ensuring that their students have learned what they were promised they'd learn upon admission. Their statements highlight the fact that, as colleges and universities face challenges and questions about how best to deliver upon the promise of higher education, boards must recognize their ultimate responsibility for ensuring a high-quality learning experience for students.

As a result, boards must become as aware of issues that define quality and educational outcomes as they are about fiscal concerns. Strategic academic affairs committees that call for and analyze metrics about quality and outcomes will help boards engage in an area that they have avoided too often.

The quality of our academic programs also mandates that boards understand and engage with academic administrators and faculty members in more meaningful discussions. This isn't about boards substituting their authority for that of faculty members in designing academic programs or courses. Rather, it is a recognition that boards need to understand the essential purpose of the institutions that they oversee.

# 9. Develop a Renewed Commitment to Shared Governance

Bold change requires a sense of teamwork and collaboration, and high-performing boards need to recognize that their authority for strategic decision making is a multistakeholder process. Boards that choose to act precipitously or presume a top-down management style in making decisions will likely reap only counterproductive results.

AGB's advocacy of "integral leadership" as a means for collaborative decision making emphasizes the basic tenets of shared governance. There is a long and often contentious history about how best to engage all parties in institutional strategies, especially boards and faculty members. Today, those challenges of collaboration are compounded by a changing faculty makeup (for instance, the growing number of adjuncts) and that faculty's commitment to institutional governance.

The need for an inclusive process to factor in all the implications of fiscal, academic, and human-resource challenges is apparent. Effective boards will, along with senior administrators, seek to establish meaningful methods of engagement and recognize the importance of collaboration with each other and the faculty.

# 10. Focus on Accountability

Ultimately, highly effective boards recognize that they are accountable for higher education's most fundamental principles: institutional autonomy and independence, the protection of academic freedom, and service to a public purpose. Governmental efforts to increase oversight through institutional ratings and major changes to accreditation, while designed to address essential concerns about cost and value, must not infringe upon these most essential values of higher education. How well boards meet their own responsibility to be accountable will significantly influence American higher education's future. Ours is a unique model of institutional policy setting; it depends upon boards and their individual members being fully aware of the stakes associated with being accountable and demonstrating a strong commitment to protecting the inherent principles that define their work.

These are uncertain times for higher education. While we in the United States have the world's most outstanding and varied higher education system, calls for significant change abound. Responding to those calls will require a new level of collaboration, inclusive of presidential vision, faculty participation, and focused board engagement. Whether a board moves to a higher level of strategic governance will require new understandings, with presidents who are open and willing to partner with their boards, and with boards that demonstrate they comprehend the task ahead.

How we do governance is getting a lot of attention. We need to work together to get it right.

# SOU Board Retreat
## Greg Perkinson / VPFA

# THE 4 DISCIPLINES OF EXECUTION (4DX)

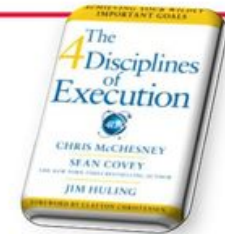| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. DISCIPLINE OF FOCUS** | **2. DISCIPLINE OF LEVERAGE** | **3. DISCIPLINE OF ENGAGEMENT** | **4. DISCIPLINE OF ACCOUNTABILITY** |
| Focus on your Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) | Act on Lead Measures | Use a Compelling Scoreboard | Create a Cadence of Accountability |

# The 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX)

## Discipline 1: Focus on your Wildly Important Goals (WIGs)

- Set only 1 or 2 measurable, achievable goals that you believe _will_ lead to your success
- WIGs are not strategy statements, they actually set a goal _from x to y by when_

## Discipline 2: Gain leverage by acting on Lead Measures

- Lag Measures define the success of your goals, but are hard for the team to influence
- Lead Measures are predictive of achieving the lag measure, and are easier to influence

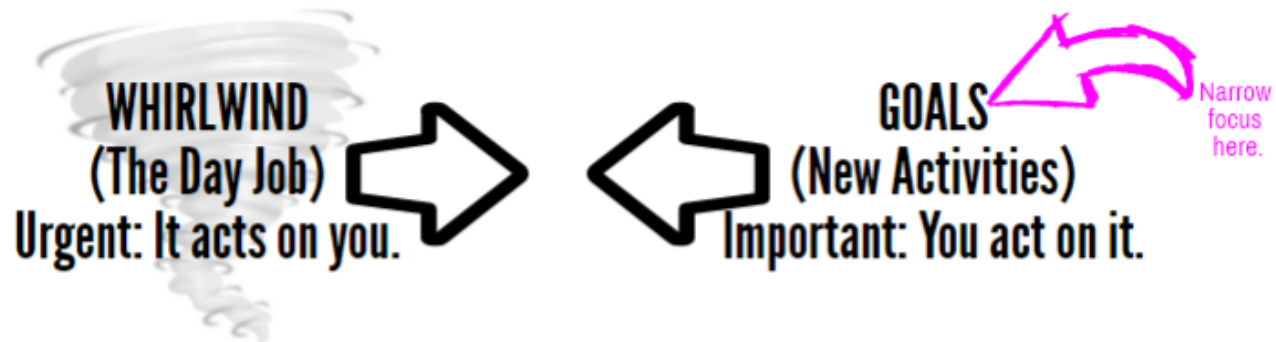## Discipline 3: Engage your team with a Compelling Scoreboard

- The team needs a compelling visual display that everyone can see
- It should show the progress of the lag and lead measures – and should take 5 seconds to answer the question, "Are we winning?"

## Discipline 4: Drive progress with a Cadence of Accountability

- All team members commit to making some difference in the next week
- The team meets weekly to confirm progress and support each other
- Each commitment must be something that you believe will move the lead measures

# 1. Focus on the Wildly Important

The first discipline is to focus your finest effort on the one or two goals that will make all the difference, instead of giving mediocre effort to dozens of goals.

**WHIRLWIND**
(The Day Job)
Urgent: It acts on you.

**GOALS**
(New Activities)
Important: You act on it.

Narrow focus here.

Wildly important goals (WIGs) are goals you must achieve with total excellence beyond the whirlwind (ex: strategic priorities).

Overhaul all reporting capability lost from USSE by June 30, 2021

**THE CHALLENGE:**
Determine your WIG, achieve it, and make it a natural part of your team's operation.*

# 1. Focus on the Wildly Important

## Rules of Focus:

You'll want to cheat on the rules, even just a little. Fight that urge!

1.) No team focuses on more than two wildly important goals at the same time. Don't overload a team, leader, or person.
2.) The battles you choose must win the war. Goals at lower levels must ensure the success of higher level goals.
3.) Senior leaders can veto, but not dictate. Teams choose their own goals.
4.) All goals must have a finish line in the form of from X to Y by when. We call them SMART goals.

*This does NOT mean you abandon your other important goals. They are still on your radar, but they don't require your finest diligence or your effort right now. If you achieve a WIG, you can move on to another goal.

# 2. Act on the Lead Measures

The second discipline is to apply disproportionate energy to the activities that drive your lead measures.  This provides the leverage for achieving the lag measures.

## LAG MEASURE
-By the time you get this data the result has already happened; they lag.
-Tells you if you've achieved the goal (aka an outcome measure).
-Hard to do anything about it before it's already happened.
    -Example: how often your car breaks down on the road.

### LEAD MEASURE
-These are predictive: if the lead measure changes you can predict that the lag will too.
-Tells you if you are likely to achieve the goal (aka a process measure).
-Is within your control and gives you a 'heads up' on whether you'll achieve the goal; influenceable.
    -Example: how often your car receives routine maintenance.
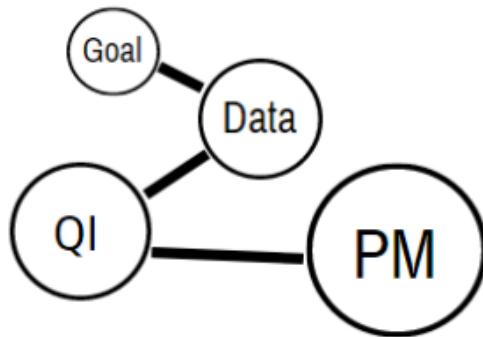
# 2. Act on the Lead Measures

## THE CHALLENGE:

**Isolate and consistently track the right levers.**



predictive

Lever (lead measure)

Rock (lag measure)

influenceable
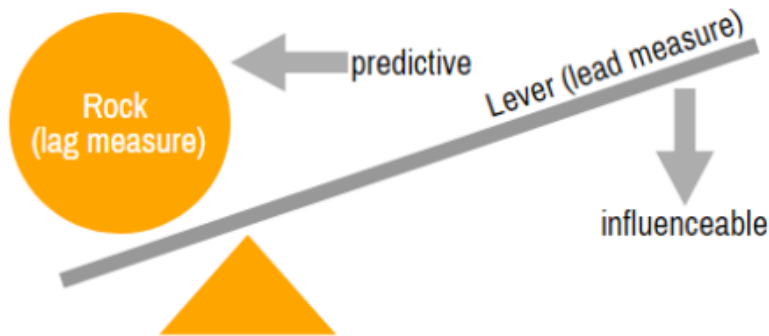
**How to choose the right levers:**

-80/20 activities: 20% of your effort will go towards the WIG; the other 80% to the whirlwind.
-Too many lead measures will dissipate pressure; be intentional with your measures!
-Remember, they must predict your goal AND be something your team can influence.



Goal

Data

QI

PM

**Remember: Without data, you can't drive performance on the lead measures;**
**without lead measures, you don't have leverage to impact your WIG.**

# 3. Keep a Compelling Scoreboard

The third discipline is to make sure everyone knows the score at all times, so that they can tell whether or not they are winning.

## This is the discipline of engagement. People play differently when they're keeping score.



Can see at a glance if
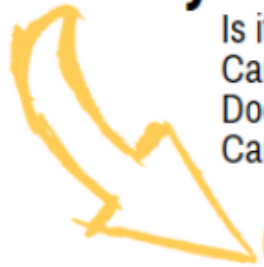they're winning?
= Engaged

VS.

Don't know the score?
= Disengaged

## THE CHALLENGE:
Play to win. If we operate exclusively in the whirlwind we're giving everything we have just to sustain our day to day operation and survive.

# 3. Keep a Compelling Scoreboard
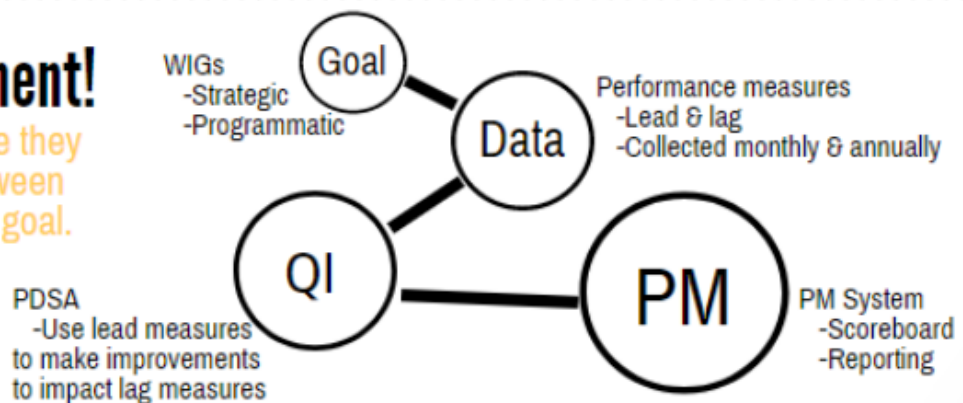
## A Players' Scoreboard

Is it simple? It should only show the data needed to play the game.
Can we see it easily? Without a visible scoreboard our goals get lost in the whirlwind.
Does it show lead & lag measures? We need to see both to watch the bets play out.
Can we tell at a glance if we're winning? Use the five second rule.

**(our performance management system)**

## Results drive engagement!

When team members keep score they understand the connection between performance and reaching their goal.

**WIGs**
-Strategic
-Programmatic

**Goal**

**Data**

**Performance measures**
-Lead & lag
-Collected monthly & annually

**QI**

**PM**

**PDSA**
-Use lead measures to make improvements to impact lag measures

**PM System**
-Scoreboard
-Reporting

# 4. Create a Cadence of Accountability

The fourth discipline is to create a cadence of accountability, a frequently recurring cycle of accounting for past performance and planning to move the score forward.

## Disciplines 1-3 set up the game, but until you apply Discipline 4, your team isn't in the game.
*This discipline literally makes the difference between successful and failed execution.

## THE CHALLENGE:

### Stay focused in spite of the whirlwind.

### How?
-Each session, commit one or two specific actions that will directly affect your lead measure(s).
-Report your results to each other in the next session.

# 4. Create a Cadence of Accountability

**SHARED accountability**

**Team members are accountable to each other.**
-Follow-through is handled in a disciplined way.
-Personal commitments are made to the entire team.

**Commitments:**
-Developed by the team members, not bosses.
-Might change regularly.
-Are often actions that the whirlwind devours first.
-Must meet two standards:
  -Must represent a specific deliverable.
  -Must influence the lead measure.
-Sessions are like science experiments:
  -Team members commit to try new ideas to
  influence the scoreboard, test hypotheses,
  and bring back the results.

**Regular WIG Sessions.**
-Consistency establishes a cadence.
-Sessions are sacred; they always happen.
-The whirlwind is NOT allowed in.

**Parkinson's Law:**
**Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.**
If you actively schedule commitments into your week, the
whirlwind is less likely to draw your focus away from the goal.

**Sessions are focused.**
-Discussion limited to moving the scoreboard.
-30 minute limit.
-Schedule a meeting specifically for a WIG session
  OR
-Use regularly scheduled meetings and designate a
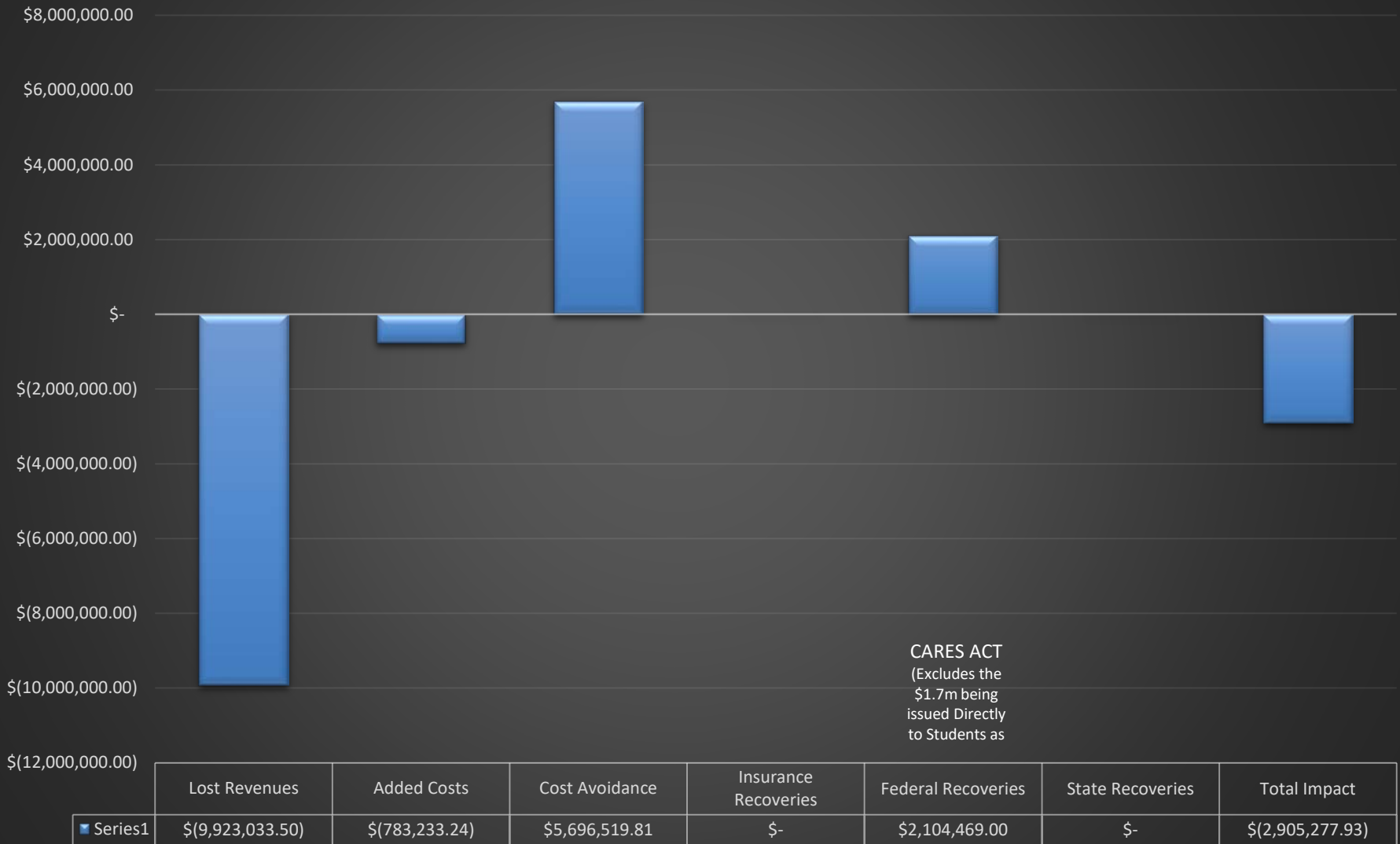portion of the agenda as the WIG session.

**WIG Session Agenda:**
I.  Account: Report on commitments.
II.  Review the scoreboard: Learn from successes & failures.
III. Plan: Clear the path & make new commitments.

# University Business Model and Survivability

- **Current Business Model:**
  Tuition and state revenue dependent and constrained by cost-side with uncontrollable components

- **VPFA Financial Exigency Triggers and Mitigations**
  (Ahead to pg. 84)

# COVID-19 Fiscal Impact
## 8/11/2020



| | Lost Revenues | Added Costs | Cost Avoidance | Insurance Recoveries | Federal Recoveries | State Recoveries | Total Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Series1 | $(9,923,033.50) | $(783,233.24) | $5,696,519.81 | $- | $2,104,469.00 | $- | $(2,905,277.93) |

CARES ACT
(Excludes the $1.7m being issued Directly to Students as

# Estimating Extent of Revenue Redux

- Tuition and fees
  - Historic trends in student behavior are no longer reliable
  - Out-of-state and international enrollment at risk.
  - Additional attention needs to be paid to underrepresented students who are more likely to have their educational paths disrupted.
  - Maintaining gains made in increased remissions will continue to be the best way to target those most at risk.
  - Fees that are specific to services that students may no longer be able to access in a remote learning environment may have to be reduced or foregone.
- State Funding?
  - Solid this FY; could be decimated next biennium.
  - In times of major recessions, universities' have taken disproportionate cuts in state funding that have long-term effects, especially on underrepresented students.

# Cost Management Strategies

- Biggest lever: personnel costs 82% of E&G costs
- Options are limited by contractual bargaining agreements, state requirements for universities' participation in PERS and PEBB.
- Actions that are more readily available:
  - Using OR work share program – Furlough 20-40%
  - Faculty furlough (8 days)
  - Hiring Freeze: Delay or keep open vacant positions
  - Salary freeze for Admin (could pivot to progressive salary redux)
  - Another option: temporary or permanent layoffs
- Supplies and services (cut hard already)
  - Some direct cost increases – technology; PPE and professional Development
  - Some savings – travel reimbursements
- Use of reserves (fund balance or building fee reserve) – a one-time stopgap…not sustainable
- Closely monitor Cash. Weeks of "run time" (ops reserves)

**Summary**

**"USS University"**
**A Framework for Assessing Value vs. Vulnerability**

New York University business professor, Scott Galloway, provides a framework for analyzing higher education's economic circumstances after comparing K-12 to higher education re-openings in the U.S.  Galloway maintains that the two—universities and K-12—should not be conflated. He asserts that the nation's pandemic response has been incompetent and recommends in-person classes should be "minimal, ideally none."  He depicts a concept of survivability and introduces a model of his concepts. Galloway likens universities to ". . . 2,800+ cruise ships retrofitted with white boards and a younger cohort . . .," a nod to title of the article.

Regarding universities, Galloway emphasizes that "for many of these schools [economic circumstances] are dire, and administrators will need imagination — and taxpayer dollars — to avoid burning the village to save it."  One of his key points, relevant to SOU, is that while some very large universities enjoy revenue streams from technology transfer, hospitals, returns on multibillion dollar endowments, etc., the bulk of colleges have become tuition dependent; SOU is somewhat--though not completely--tuition dependent.  Galloway projects that if students don't return in the fall, "many colleges will have to take drastic action that could have serious long-term impacts on their ability to fulfill their missions."

Thus, the question is: Who will thrive, survive, struggle, or face significant challenges? Galloway's chart/model illustrates the concepts of value and vulnerability as two axes, creating four quadrants of thrive, survive, struggle and challenged. The author identifies his aim "to catalyze a conversation about how universities can adjust their value proposition."  While Southern Oregon University is not one of the 440 schools analyzed in this study, Galloway's work provides an opportunity to discuss how the variables considered in this study could inform an assessment of SOU.

"USS University" by John Galloway:  https://www.profgalloway.com/uss-university

# University Survivability (from Galloway)

Galloway plotted each university across two axes (four quadrants):

- **Value**: (Credential * Experience * Education) / Tuition.

- **Vulnerability**: (Endowment / Student and % International Students). Low endowment and dependence on full-tuition international students make a university vulnerable to Covid shock, as they may decide to sit this semester/year out.

# University Survivability (from Galloway)

Quadrants:

- **Thrive**: The elite schools and those that offer strong value have an opportunity to emerge stronger as they consolidate the market, double down on exclusivity, and/or embrace big and small tech to increase the value via a decrease in cost per student.
- **Survive**: Schools that will see demand destruction and lower revenue, but will be fine, as they have the brand equity, credential-to-cost ratio, and/or endowments to weather the storm.
- **Struggle**: Tier-2 schools with one or more comorbidities, such as high admit rates (anemic waiting lists), high tuition, or scant endowments.
- **Challenged**: Sodium pentathol cocktail of high admit rates, high tuition, low endowments, dependence on international students, and weak brand equity.

# The "So What" Questions

- What changes can/should SOU make to move from "struggle" to "thrive?"

- What is the board's role in leading change?

- What is missing from this dialogue and analysis?