

Immediate Guidance for Board Chairs: Considerations for College & University Governing Boards



The following are high-impact practices for board chairs to consider as they strive to help the board, senior leaders, and their institutions strategically navigate the quickly evolving higher education governance landscape:

MEET: Before making any decisions to change your practices, **meet with your entire board and ask thoughtful questions.**

- Task a committee to discuss the alignment of potential changes with the institutional mission, and report back to the board.

Consider: What are the ramifications of this action in the short term and long term? What aspects of your institution will be impacted if the change is made? Does your board have, or is your board developing, a game plan for if and when you believe your institution's autonomy is under threat? Is this proposed change truly necessary? What role does the board play in any adjustments?

REVIEW: With the entire board, take the time to **review and find consensus on how to interpret your institution's mission statement and core values.**

- Upholding the mission is one of the board's major roles and responsibilities. Your mission should be your north star.

Consider: What are your institution's core values? To what principles do you adhere, irrespective of the larger context or climate? Regardless of ideological differences, what is the unified way the board can make decisions on behalf of its unique institution?

IDENTIFY: Appoint a committee to reach out to key constituencies to **identify the most pressing challenges facing groups on campus.** This group should report back to you as the chair and the larger board.

- The committee should connect with liaisons to the general counsel, HR, the chair of the faculty senate, your vice chancellor for research, etc., and determine issues these groups are facing based on recent executive orders. This taskforce would be responsible for listening and reporting back to the board, so that the board can make informed decisions.

Consider: How might the board calculate the cost of change in terms of money, morale, diversity, equity, and institutional independence?

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DISCUSS: With the institution president, **discuss your board's institutional priorities.**

- Do not compromise those aims in light of the current climate; that is a secondary discussion. You must first be clear on your present course of action.

Consider: What initiatives has your institution committed to that advance the goals of higher education? How can those initiatives be continued considering current mandates or orders?

SUPPORT: After meeting with key constituencies and discussing priorities, consider how the board might explicitly **support the needs of key campus partners with corresponding policies, personnel, finances, etc.**

- Use the information gathered to align decision making, thereby modeling your core values as a Board.

Consider: What can you do to signal support for outcomes that serve all members of your institution?

SUSTAIN: Unless the institution receives direct communication requiring action or if you are affected by agency-specific orders, **sustain your commitments to strategic priorities and core values.**

- Refrain from making a public statement or board resolution unless responding to an action by the state or federal government (or other relevant external entity) that has a direct impact on the mission or operations of your institution.

Consider: Knowing that short term changes can have long term consequences, how can your board determine the ROI for maintaining or changing processes?



The guidance provided in this document is not exhaustive and should be used in conjunction with other resources to support board actions that are specific to the people and institution the board is responsible for governing.

Additional resources will be published on the forthcoming CSIG webpage. Additionally, you can follow us on social media (@CSIGforHigherEd).