

AGB CONSULTING

Rick Legon  
AGB President  
October 21, 2014

Special Session with Presidents, Rectors, and Vice Rectors

PRESENTED TO

State Council of Higher  
Education for Virginia

# Big Issues Facing Higher Education

1. Business Model
2. Affordability
3. Educational Delivery
4. Attainment, Retention and Completion
5. Academic Workforce
6. Technology
7. Globalization
8. Institutional Risk
9. Public Policy Issues—HEA, CASA, College Ratings, Tax Reform, External Influences

# Consequential Governance

1. Focus on accountability and fiduciary principles
2. Board structure should facilitate a focus on things that matter
3. Strategy over reports—future over past
4. Board lead in advocacy for higher education—value proposition
5. Board-presidential leadership and institutional governance
6. Defend board independence

# The Partnership: Board And President

**Board of the  
President**

1. Clear expectations
2. Common sense of purpose
3. Shared vision
4. Mutually agreed upon plan
5. Commitment to inclusion  
by all stake holders

**President of  
the Board**



# Rectors

- Always Be the Best Prepared Board Member



# Board Leadership

- Board work affects institutional reputation, mostly based on how it conducts board business
  - Internal constituencies
  - External constituencies
  
- Board meetings should be models of good governance, and focus on that which only a board can address—consequential governance



# Board Leadership

- Partnerships with presidents and rectors
- Election processes and the board choosing its leaders—important decisions
- Success of leadership depends on leadership strengths, effective strategies, respect from colleagues, and appropriate support and cooperation—building consensus



# Board Leadership

- Manage board communications effectively; all board members in the loop
- Make good committee appointments
  - Make sure committees function effectively
  - Rotate membership appropriately
- Prepared for board meetings



# Board Leadership

- Make sure board members' time is well spent
  - Time for discussion on strategic issues and challenges
  - Monitoring the performance of the institution
  - Time for board education – about the institution, state or local issues, national trends
- Develop ways to strengthen board effectiveness
  - Meetings, agendas, committees
- Integral leadership – engagement with the president, faculty and other stakeholders



# Board Leadership



## Strive for Transparency

Mistrust abounds if legislators, alumni, faculty, students, and taxpayers feel they are out of the loop



# Board Leadership

- Don't be drawn into an executive committee or small group for your discussions because it is easier



# Board Leadership

- **Know what you want to say to the press**
  - Rectors are the public face of the board, the chief spokesperson and advocate for the institution
  - Carry that mantel well



# Board Leaders and Board Performance

- Boards Must be Self Regulating
  - A president cannot police the board
  - Challenge: Governance is a team sport but boards are often composed of quarterbacks
- A Team of Equals...Fiduciary Principles



# Facilitating Collegiality

- Collective thinking is smarter than individual opinions.
  - Respecting the right of others to disagree
  - Avoiding impugning the motives or integrity of others with whom one disagrees



# Qualities of Board Leaders

- Perceived as fair
- Open minded on issues
- Able to listen
- Firm when necessary
- Trustworthy – keeps confidences
- Keeps lines of communication open with board members and the president



## Sample Statement from a Public Institution: Commitments by Board Members

- Commit to the public trust
- Seek first to understand then to be understood
- Attend and engage
- Maintain confidentiality when appropriate
- Address conflicts of interest
- Remain objective and fair
- No tolerance for maligning others



## Sample Statement from a Public Institution: Commitments by Board Members (continued)

- Respect final board decisions
- Yield to the rector and president as the spokespersons for the board and institution
- Build strong relationships with colleagues
- Seek the views of others and accept criticism
- Trust other board members and be worthy of their trust

# Q&A

Thank You

Richard D. Legon  
President, AGB  
Rickl@agb.org