

# Best Practices of Effective Public Boards

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# Agenda

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- About AGB: Who We Are, Who We Serve
- The Environment
- The Anatomy of an Engaged Board
- Six Principles of Board Leadership
- The Goal: A Strategic Board
- How the Work Gets Done
- Final Thoughts

# AGB: Why do we exist?

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- The future of our society and economy depends on higher education-driven innovation.
- Higher education-driven innovation depends on strategic leadership.
- Strategic leadership depends on engaged board members.
- Engaged board members depend on insights to lead with confidence and govern with knowledge.
- AGB is the trusted source for engaged board members to provide strategic leadership for higher education to drive student success and institutional vitality.

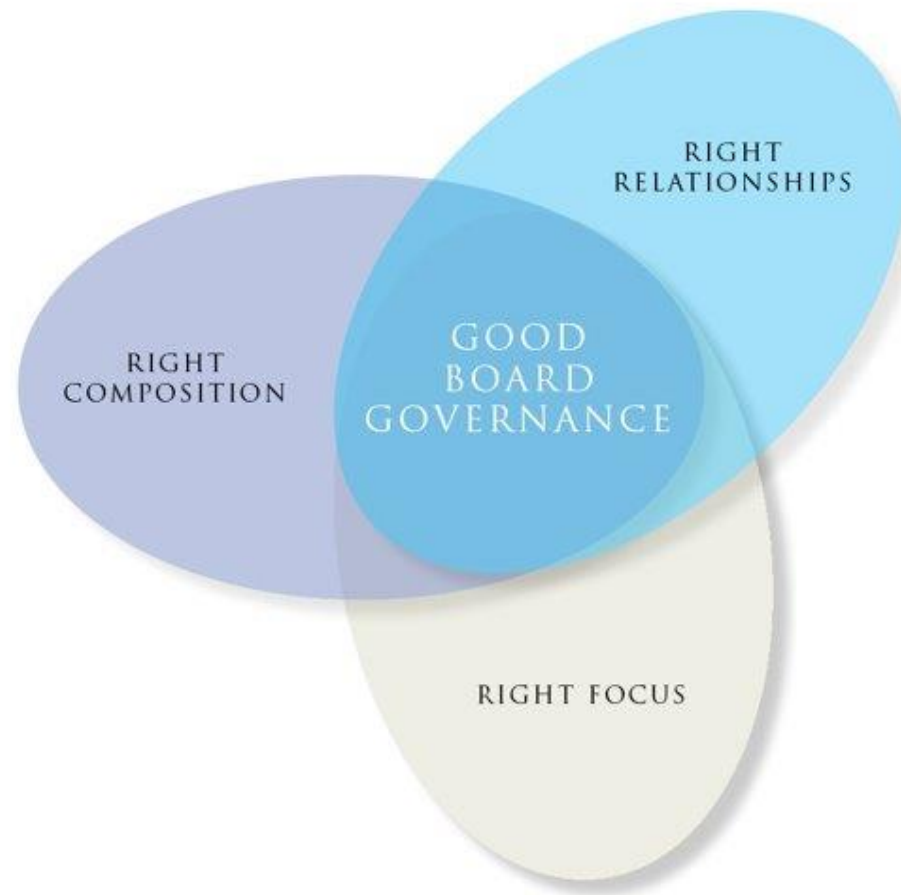
- **AGB Vision**
  - AGB aspires to a world where college, university, and foundation board members are relied upon as **indispensable, strategic partners** for presidents and CEOs to advance student success and well-being, institutional vitality, and the public's understanding of the role and benefits of higher education.
- **AGB Mission**
  - AGB empowers college, university, and foundation boards and board members to govern with knowledge and lead with confidence by delivering practical insights through its publications, events, and services.
- **AGB Members**
  - 40,000 trustees and leaders of higher education institutions.
  - Nearly 2,000 colleges, universities, and institutionally related foundations.

# The Environment

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- Value Proposition: Innovation/Relevance
- Higher Education's Business Model: Institutional Vitality
- Affordability/Debt
- Student Success
  - Changing student demographics
  - Student mental health/well-being, food and housing insecurity
- Implications of Technology
  - New/enhanced academic programs
  - Educational delivery
- Accountability/Regulation

# The Anatomy of an Engaged Board



# Six Principles of Board Leadership

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1. Accountability
2. President
3. Strategy
4. Composition
5. Oversight
6. Commitment

# Six Principles of Board Leadership

## 1. Accountability

- The board is accountable for everything that happens and/or fails to happen within the institution or foundation.
- While accountability cannot be delegated, responsibility *can* be delegated.

## 2. President

- Hiring, supporting, and assessing the right president is the most critical responsibility for the board.
- The president-board chair partnership is critical—mutual expectations for effective leadership.

## 3. Strategy

- Strategies should focus on both student success & well-being and institutional vitality.
- Boards' focus should ensure a collaborative, on-going process.
- Evaluate options and alternatives, pros and cons, implications and risks.



# Six Principles of Board Leadership (cont'd)

## 4. Composition

- Diverse skills, experiences and competencies should align with the institution's strategy.
- Same with board committees – where work gets done.

## 5. Oversight

- NIFO to oversee execution of strategies and policy development to mitigate risks.
  - Collaboration between boards, presidents and cabinet members.
- Risk appetite vs risk tolerance.
- Crisis communications planning and understanding the board's role in a crisis.
  - *Question to ask: When are we going to rehearse our crisis communication plans?*

## 6. Commitment

- Trusteeship is a critical role requiring significant time.
- Suggest at least several hours per week spanning meetings, reading and learning to advance the institution's mission .
- Shared governance = board / stakeholder communications.

# The Goal: A Strategic Board

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- **Time** on strategic issues
- Focus on areas of **uncertainty**
- **Engage issues early** in the decision process
- Use **discussion and dialogue**, not presentations
- Be an active **thought-leader** with the president

# How the Work Gets Done

- The anatomy of a good board:
  - The right people
  - The right focus
  - The right relationships
- Hallmarks of highly-effective boards:
  - **Engaged and informed:** Respects differences between governing and managing, asks the right questions, and demonstrates a culture of inclusion and curiosity.
  - **Support presidential leadership:** Acts as an indispensable strategic partner and understands the distinct role of board and president.
  - **Balance advocacy and oversight:** Members serve as ambassadors while ensuring accountability, maintain independence from external influences, and consider/manage risk.

# What's next?

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- Continuous learning.
- Flipped on-boarding.
- Leverage your board professional.
- What's on our next board & committee agenda(s), cadence?
- Risk heat maps.
- KPIs and dashboards.
- Align with your board chair and president.

# Final Thoughts

AGB is here to support you in your work as a trustee by providing vital information, expert counsel, advocacy, and customized consulting services.

## ***Upcoming Events***

- 2020 Foundation Leadership Forum, January 26-28, San Diego, CA
- Institute for Board Chairs & Presidents, January 2020 in Naples, FL and Phoenix, AZ
- 2020 National Conference on Trusteeship, April 3-7, Washington DC

## ***AGB Resources for New Board Members:***

- [\*An Anatomy of Good Board Governance in Higher Education\*](#)
- [\*Higher Education Governing Boards\*](#)
- [\*AGB Board of Directors' Statement on the Fiduciary Duties of Governing Board Members\*](#)
- [\*AGB Top Strategic Issues for Boards 2018-2019\*](#)