

Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

2010 *Policies,
Practices,
and Composition*

of Governing Boards of Independent
Colleges and Universities

Executive Summary



TIAA-CREF institute

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TIAA-CREF institute

The TIAA-CREF Institute conducts and supports actionable research intended to advance the ways individuals and institutions plan for financial security, and helps strengthen strategic thinking and decision-making of college and university leaders. Research findings are presented in TIAA-CREF Institute publications and with their partnering organizations such as AGB.

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Introduction



In 2010, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) surveyed higher education governing boards in the United States regarding board composition and selected policies and practices. AGB has conducted similar research since the mid-1980s. This report summarizes the data and examines trends for independent college and university governing boards, based on surveys completed by representatives from more than 500 independent institutions. A separate report summarizes the results of a survey of public colleges, universities, and systems.

The report provides trustees, presidents, staff, and scholars with a basis for comparing the attributes of their own institutions' boards with those of other institutions. Data are reported for all independent institutions (507) and by type of institution (associate's, baccalaureate, master's, doctoral and research, and specialized). The survey results reveal the range of practices and trends with regard to the following:

- board member demographics including age, gender, race and ethnicity, and occupations;
- student, faculty, and alumni board members;
- board size;
- length of terms for trustees and chairs;
- written policies for removing board members;
- attendance;
- annual contributions from trustees;
- trustee service on other types of boards;
- use of executive sessions;
- frequency and length of meetings;
- most common committees;
- board Web sites, voting electronically, and participating in committee meetings electronically;
- presidential search; and
- board education and assessment practices.

Historic data were drawn primarily from previous surveys published by AGB in 2004, 1998, 1997, 1991, 1986, and 1985. Additional sources were used for data on the gender and racial composition of boards in the early and mid-1900s. Sources are noted in "References" at the end of this report.

Board leaders can use these findings to consider best practices and evaluate their own board's performance.

Survey invitations were sent to chief executives and board professionals of 1,438 independent nonprofit colleges and universities in the United States, and completed surveys were returned by 507 institutions, a response rate of 28.4 percent. The number of respondents to each question varied. The chart below displays the Carnegie classifications of respondents. We believe the survey data reflect the universe of independent nonprofit college and university governing boards in the United States but may not be typical of institutions with very small numbers of peers, including some specialized institutions. To allow for comparisons with like institutions, data are presented separately for the boards of associate's (AA), baccalaureate (BA), master's (MA), doctoral and research (DRU), and specialized institutions.

CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

16	Associate's Colleges (AA)
194	Baccalaureate Colleges (BA)
159	Master's Colleges and Universities (MA)
45	Doctoral and Research Universities (DRU)
93	Specialized Institutions (Specialized)
507	Total number of respondents

Frequent comparisons are made in this report between results of AGB's 2010 and 2004 surveys. Of the 507 independent institutions that participated in the 2010 survey, 245 (48.3 percent) also participated in the 2004 survey. While only about half of the participating institutions were the same, the distribution of institutions by Carnegie classification was nearly the same in both surveys, and we believe the populations to be comparable. Slightly more master's level and doctoral and research institutions participated in 2010; the number of institutions in each of the other categories declined slightly from 2004 to 2010. See Table 1, below. To address concerns about whether any reported changes or trends may be due to variations in population, additional analyses were performed on race and ethnicity and gender data, comparing the matched population and total respondents for 2004 and 2010. Analyses of trends showed similar results for the matched population and all respondents.

TABLE 1. 2004 AND 2010 INDEPENDENT COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

<i>Carnegie</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2010</i>
	#	%	#	%
AA	17	03.4	16	03.1
BA	196	39.6	194	38.2
MA	139	28.1	159	31.3
DRU	41	08.2	45	08.8
Specialized	97	19.6	93	18.3
Other	4	00.8	0	00.0
Total	494	99.7	507	99.7

I. Executive Summary



SIZE

Using a historical survey base ranging from 1986 to 2010, findings reveal that the *average number of voting board members remained relatively stable* over the years: 29 in 1986, 30 in 2004, and 29 in 2010.

GENDER

Men outnumbered women on governing boards by more than two to one in 2010, 69.8 percent to 30.2 percent, although the number of women on boards increased 1.8 percentage points since 2004. The percentage of women trustees on boards has continued to increase over the past four decades, and doubled since 1977, but the rate of change has slowed in recent years.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

In 2010, 12.5 percent of board members were racial and ethnic minorities, including 7.4 percent African Americans or Blacks, 2.4 percent Hispanics or Latinos, 1.6 percent Asians and Pacific Islanders, 0.4 percent American Indians and Alaskan Natives, and 0.7 percent other races; 87.5 percent were White non-Hispanic. Minority trustees increased from 11.9 percent in 2004 to 12.5 percent in 2010.

AGE

The average age of board members of independent institutions has increased. In 2010, most trustees (69.0 percent) were 50-69 years old, compared to 66.5 percent in 2004. Board members 50 or older increased to 83.1 percent in 2010, up from 79.8 percent in 2004; included in that bracket were those 70 or older.

OCCUPATIONS

The professional background of more than half of trustees of independent colleges and universities in 2010 was business. The current or former primary occupations of board members were: 53.0 percent business, 22.0 percent professional service, 13.1 percent education, 11.3 percent other occupations (nonprofit executives, clergy, homemakers, artists, government officials, and others) and 0.6 percent agriculture or ranching.

STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF ON BOARDS

In 2010, 8.5 percent of independent college boards included at least one student as a voting member of the board, and 12.5 percent included at least one nonvoting student member. Among those institutions with a student board member (voting or nonvoting), the median number was one.

Boards at 14.9 percent of independent colleges and universities included at least one faculty member as a voting member, and 14.1 percent included a nonvoting faculty member. Among those institutions with a faculty member on the board (voting or nonvoting), the median number was one.

Nearly one-fifth (19.5 percent) of independent colleges and universities included at least one staff member as a voting board member, and 15.1 percent included one or more nonvoting staff. Among those institutions with a staff member on the board (voting or nonvoting), the median number was one.

CEO AS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD

Most independent institutions, 76.4 percent, included the chief executive as a member of the board, 53 percent as a voting member and 23.7 percent without vote.

ALUMNI BOARD MEMBERS

Just over half (51.7 percent) of board members of independent colleges and universities were alumni, though this varied by type of institution, with more alumni serving on boards of research and doctoral universities.

Almost half (49 percent) of independent colleges included one or more representatives of the alumni association as required members of the board, 42.1 percent with vote and 8.1 percent without vote. Among those institutions with an alumni association representative on the board (voting or nonvoting), the median number was one.

TERMS FOR BOARD MEMBERS

The length of a single trustee term was typically three or four years, and more than half of the institutions limited the number of consecutive terms a trustee may serve. Of those imposing limits, almost all allowed a former trustee to serve again, typically after a hiatus of one year.

MEETINGS

Independent boards met an average of three or four times a year and the business portion of a meeting typically lasted four or five hours. Thirty percent of boards reported typical meeting attendance of 91 to 100 percent of their board members; about half reported typical attendance levels at about 76 to 90 percent.

COMMITTEES

Independent college and university governing boards reported an average of eight standing committees in 2010, one more than in 2004. The most common board committees, in descending order, were finance (94.7 percent), development (88.6 percent), trustees/nominating/governance (83.8 percent), executive (82 percent), academic affairs (79.1 percent), audit (64.6 percent), student affairs/campus life (60.4 percent), buildings and grounds (51.9 percent), and investment (47.5 percent). It was much more common for boards to have a separate audit committee in 2010 (60.4 percent) than in 2004 (38.6 percent).