

AN AGB
SURVEY

Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

AGB ASSOCIATION OF
GOVERNING BOARDS
OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES



Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

About AGB

Since 1921, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) has had one mission: to strengthen and protect this country's unique form of institutional governance through its research, services, and advocacy. Serving more than 1,300 member boards, 1,900 institutions, and 40,000 individuals, AGB is the only national organization providing university and college presidents, board chairs, trustees, and board professionals of both public and private institutions and institutionally related foundations with resources that enhance their effectiveness.



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INTRODUCTION

Despite the diverse ways that colleges and universities, their faculty, and their boards are organized, nearly all have shared governance in common. Shared governance—the principle that acknowledges the final institutional authority of governing boards and distributed authority to the administration and faculty—is a basic tenet in higher education. When working well, it brings a wealth of ideas to critical conversations and creates a sense of inclusiveness that strengthens support for decisions.

In a time of serious challenges to higher education—among them declines in enrollment and funding, shifting demographics, and public critiques of value—shared governance can be an essential institutional asset.

But how well is shared governance working today? Is it holding up in the face of changes in the faculty workforce, shifting market demands, and scarce resources? Do the traditional partners in shared governance—presidents and chancellors, faculty, and governing boards—understand each other, respect each other’s roles, and have

constructive dialogues? Are shared governance policies and practices sufficiently clear and current to provide effective guidance and transparency for institutional decision making? Or is shared governance in some places a 20th-century practice that is ill-suited for 21st-century challenges?

To understand how well shared governance currently functions, AGB conducted two surveys: one of presidents and chancellors (hereafter, “presidents”) and one of governing board members. Both surveys focused on policies, practices, and perceptions related to shared governance. More than 300 presidents completed the first survey. Nearly 2,250 governing board members completed the second. Respondents to both surveys represented AGB members from public and independent institutions and systems of higher education. Table 1 describes the survey respondents.

TABLE 1

SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY SECTOR

| | Independent Institutions | Public Institutions |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Board Members | 84% | 16% |
| Presidents and Chancellors | 72% | 28% |

Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

The key finding from the surveys is that most presidents and board members from both public and independent institutions believe that shared governance is working adequately but could be more effective. More than 95 percent of board members reported that shared governance is a very important or moderately important component of decision making at their institutions. Similarly, more than 95 percent reported that it is very important or moderately important to higher education overall.

Most presidents and board members reported that the board and faculty recognize and support each other's authority—the board's authority for overseeing the entire institution or system and the faculty's for overseeing academic programs. The majority of presidents and board members also reported that discussions of difficult matters among the board, faculty, and administration are conducted in good faith and with trust. The survey also made clear that presidents think boards and faculty could significantly improve their understanding of each other's roles.

The survey identified one specific area of concern in how the changing academic workforce affects shared governance. Full-time faculty now account for just over half of all U.S. faculty, down from over three-quarters a generation ago. Tenure-track and tenured faculty account for only about one-quarter of faculty. Despite these trends, more than 50 percent of presidents and chancellors at public and independent institutions reported that board policies related to shared governance have not changed.

The report that follows provides a more detailed look at the survey results, displaying them by public and independent respondents. It also highlights where presidents and board members hold similar views, and where they see things differently. Those distinctions deserve attention.

According to the survey data, shared governance is not perfect but it is generally "OK" on most campuses. Yet that raises the question: In today's challenging environment, is "OK" good enough?

BOARD, PRESIDENT, AND FACULTY SUPPORT OF SHARED GOVERNANCE

The Shared Governance They Want

A number of experts have examined shared governance in the broader context of challenges facing higher education. Augustana College President Steven C. Bahls provides a useful framework for how shared governance functions in his recent book *Shared Governance in Times of Change* (AGB Press, 2014). Figure 1 on page 4 shows board member and president characterizations of the current state of shared governance in their institutions based on Bahls' four "Shared Governance Perspectives."

Shared Governance Perspectives

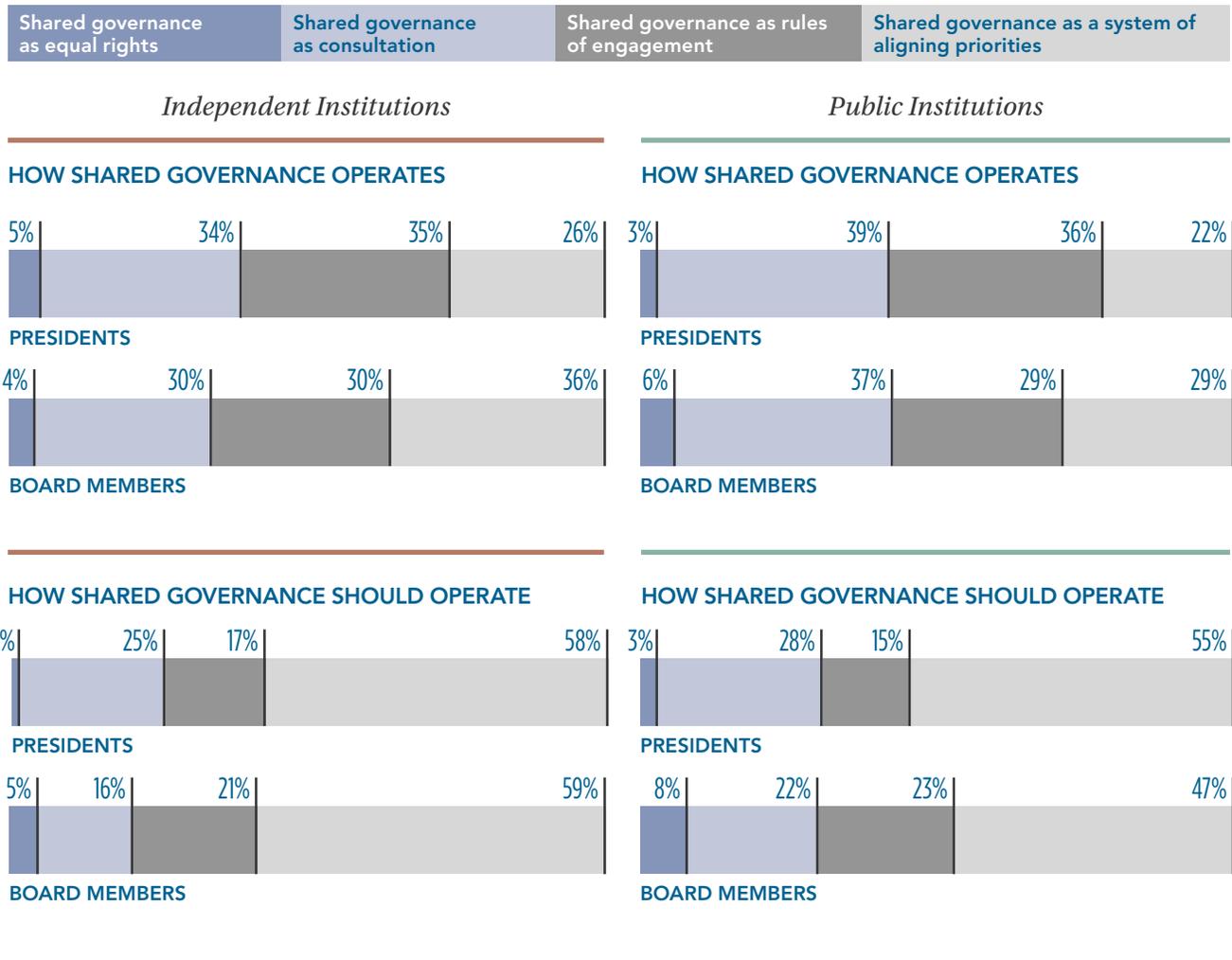
In *Shared Governance in Times of Change: A Practical Guide for Universities and Colleges*, Steven C. Bahls offers four perspectives on shared governance that the survey questions referenced. Each of the perspectives was defined as follows in the surveys:

- A. Shared governance as equal rights.** Shared governance ensures that faculty, staff, and administration have equal say in all governance matters, including budgets, academic directions of the institution, and strategic planning. Decisions are not made until a consensus is achieved.
- B. Shared governance as consultation.** Shared governance requires that those parties responsible for making decisions consult with others and consider their positions.
- C. Shared governance as rules of engagement.** Shared governance is a set of rules about the various roles and authority of the board, faculty, and administration in such things as academic decisions, budget decisions, selection of the president, and other operational decisions. Shared governance also describes rules of engagement when faculty, board members, and administrators disagree.
- D. Shared governance as a system of aligning priorities.** Shared governance is a system of open communication aimed at aligning priorities, creating a culture of shared responsibility for the welfare of the institution, and creating a system of checks and balances to ensure the institution stays mission-centered.

Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

FIGURE 1

HOW DOES SHARED GOVERNANCE OPERATE AND HOW SHOULD IT?



Board members and presidents of independent institutions differed in their assessment of how shared governance functions at their college or university. Over one-third of board members said they believe shared governance operates as a system of aligning priorities. A little over one-quarter of presidents said they think shared governance now operates that way. However, nearly identical proportions of board members and presidents—well over 50 percent—said shared governance *should* function as a system of aligning priorities.

In public institutions, there is little difference between board members' and presidents' views of how shared governance currently operates. However, as with the independent board chairs and presidents, a much greater proportion in both public groups asserted shared governance *should* operate as a system of aligning priorities. The number of public presidents who said shared governance should operate as a system of aligning priorities was roughly two-and-a-half times the number who said it currently operates that way.

Board members and presidents of both independent and public institutions did not differ substantially in their responses, although more independent board members than public board members said shared governance should operate as a system of aligning priorities. Overall, survey data suggest many presidents and board members of both public and independent institutions would prefer a shared governance system that functions differently from the one they have. If they were to pursue change, the majority of presidents and nearly half of all board members responding to the survey aspire to a shared governance system that focuses on effectively aligning priorities.

Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

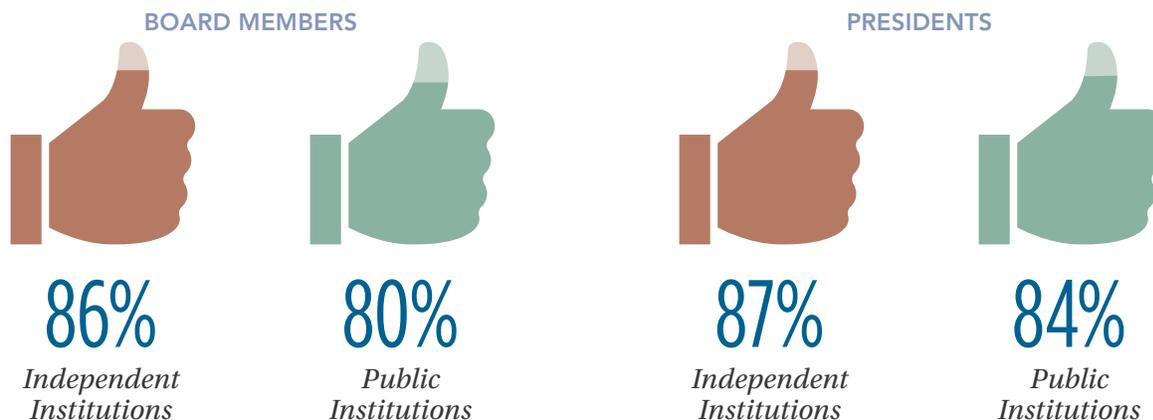
Acknowledgment of Each Other's Roles

How shared governance now operates may not be ideal, but the majority of survey respondents said that boards and faculty recognize and respect each other's role in it. Figure 2 summarizes respondents' perceptions of board support for faculty authority and faculty support for board authority.

FIGURE 2

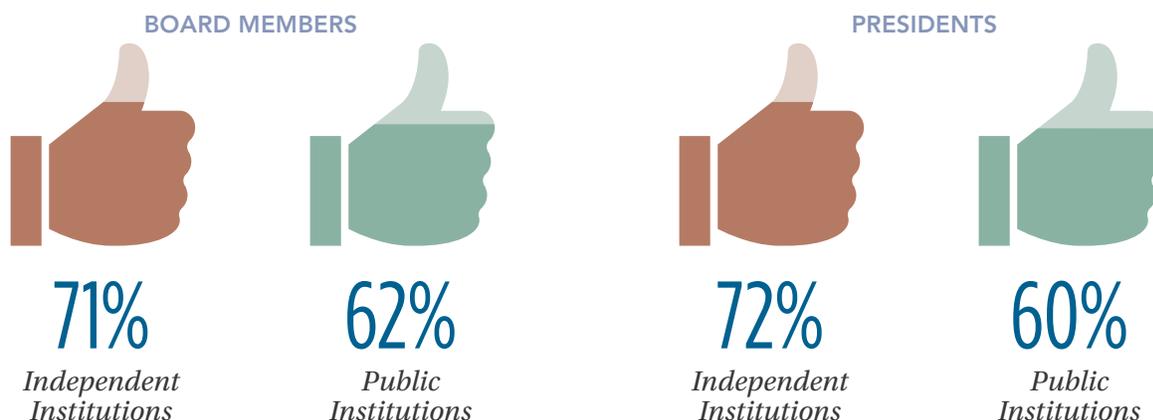
HOW SUPPORTIVE ARE BOARDS?

Respondents agree or strongly agree that the board recognizes and supports the faculty's authority in overseeing the academic programs:



HOW SUPPORTIVE ARE FACULTY?

Respondents agree or strongly agree that the faculty recognizes and supports the board's authority in overseeing the entire institution/system:



Presidents and board members generally agreed that boards recognize the faculty’s authority for academic programs and that faculty members recognize board authority in overseeing the entire institution or system. But while respondents saw support of each group by the other as substantial, they suggested that boards are more likely to recognize faculty authority than faculty are to recognize board authority. Presidential assessments of faculty recognition and support for the board’s authority were more favorable in independent institutions than in public institutions.

Administrator Support of Shared Governance

The board member survey also asked about presidents’ and chief academic officers’ support for shared governance more generally. (See Table 2.) Board members broadly agreed that top administrators show support for shared governance. However, a larger portion of board members at independent institutions than at public institutions said they strongly agreed with this assertion.

TABLE 2

BOARD MEMBER PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATOR SUPPORT FOR SHARED GOVERNANCE

| | | Independent Institutions | Public Institutions | All Institutions |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| The president and chief academic officer demonstrate support for shared governance at my institution/ system. | Strongly Agree | 45% | 33% | 43% |
| | Agree | 43% | 50% | 44% |
| | Neutral | 8% | 11% | 9% |
| | Disagree | 3% | 4% | 3% |
| | Strongly Disagree | 1% | 2% | 2% |

Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

Shared Governance Under Stress

The surveys also asked about respondents' confidence in the strength of shared governance under stress. Specifically, board members and presidents were asked whether discussions of difficult matters among the board, faculty, and administration occur in good faith and with trust. (See Table 3.)

TABLE 3

BOARD MEMBER AND PRESIDENT PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGIALLY IN TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES

Discussion of difficult matters among the board, faculty, and administration are done in good faith and with trust.

| | Independent Institutions | | Public Institutions | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | PRESIDENTS | BOARD MEMBERS | PRESIDENTS | BOARD MEMBERS |
| Strongly Agree | 16% | 30% | 22% | 21% |
| Agree | 44% | 45% | 40% | 49% |
| Neutral | 25% | 16% | 22% | 16% |
| Disagree | 12% | 7% | 13% | 8% |
| Strongly Disagree | 3% | 2% | 3% | 6% |

While over 70 percent of board members said that boards, faculty, and administrators maintain trust and good faith in discussions of difficult matters, a smaller majority of presidents agreed (about 62 percent of public and 60 percent of independent presidents). Nearly one-quarter of presidents were neutral on the durability of trust and good faith among the three parties during difficult discussions.

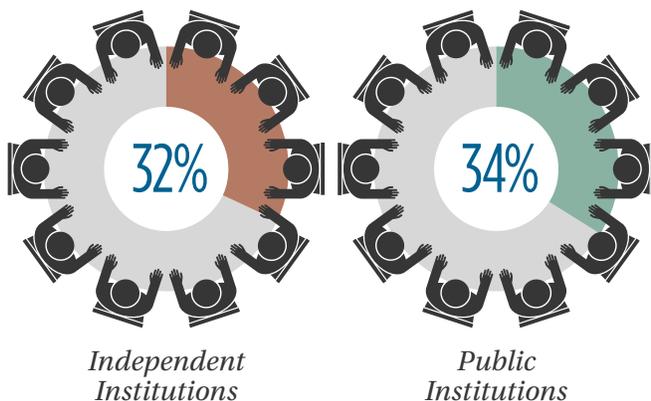
Understanding Each Other's Work

In addition to mutual acknowledgement of authority between boards and faculty and general support of shared governance by top administrators, the survey also examined board and faculty understanding of each other's responsibilities. Figure 3 compares presidents' responses about whether typical board and faculty members understand each other's work.

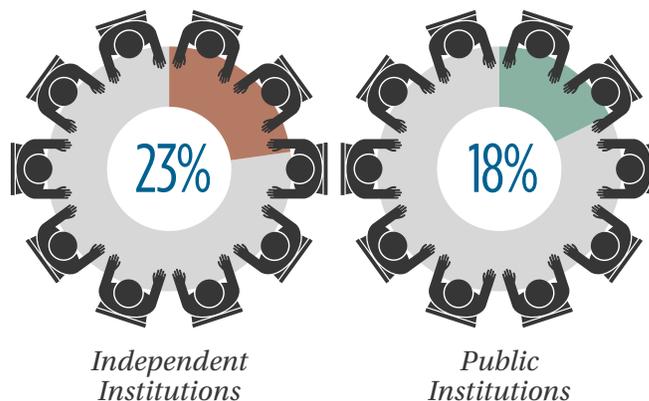
FIGURE 3

HOW WELL DO BOARDS AND FACULTY UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?

Presidents who state that a typical board member understands the **work and responsibilities of faculty** well or very well:



Presidents who state that a typical faculty member understands the **responsibilities and authority of the governing board** well or very well:



Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

Only about 30 percent of presidents reported that the typical board member understands the work of the faculty well or very well, and only about 20 percent said that the typical faculty member understands the work of the board well or very well. That is, presidents perceived board members to have greater awareness of faculty responsibilities than the reverse, although in neither case was the answer impressive. Perhaps more remarkable is the tepid degree to which presidents believed members of either group typically understand the work of the other.

Noteworthy differences in the responses of public and independent presidents include:

- Independent institution presidents were more likely than public institution presidents (51% vs. 40%) to say their typical board member understands faculty work and responsibilities “fairly well.”
- Public institution presidents were more likely than independent institution presidents (37% vs. 26%) to say their typical board member understands faculty work and responsibilities “slightly.”

While most board members and presidents aspire to high-functioning shared governance, and support for shared governance among the three groups appears relatively broad, most presidents reported that board members and faculty do not have a strong understanding of each other’s contributions.

BOARD-FACULTY INTERACTION

Modes of Interaction

If governing boards and faculty do not understand each other's important work as well as they should, then it is worth considering how the two groups work together. Governing board-faculty interaction can take a number of forms in both independent and public institutions; this is

important because structured opportunities for board members to meet and work with faculty can prove helpful in developing durable, trusting relationships.

Table 4 outlines a variety of ways that presidents said their boards and faculty work together.

TABLE 4

PRESIDENTIAL INVENTORY OF BOARD-FACULTY INTERACTIONS

In which of the following ways do members of the governing board and faculty at your institution interact?

| | Independent Institutions | Public Institutions | All Institutions |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Faculty membership on institution-wide committees (e.g. planning, budget/resources, accreditation, facilities, etc.) | 91% | 91% | 91% |
| Faculty membership on the presidential search committee | 88% | 88% | 88% |
| Faculty presentations to board and committees | 83% | 81% | 83% |
| Faculty membership on board committee(s) | 59% | 27% | 50% |
| Faculty participation in assessment of the president | 39% | 48% | 42% |
| Board member involvement (e.g. participation, membership, etc.) on individual academic department or division advisory entities | 20% | 12% | 18% |

According to the presidents surveyed, boards and faculty most commonly come together when faculty serve on institution-wide committees, a presidential search committee is convened, or faculty members present to the board. While these kinds of experiences are important, they are irregular and therefore unlikely to build and sustain deeper understanding between faculty and board members. Data from the American Council on Education show that presidents turn

over once every seven years on average, and search committees tend to be small. Presentations to the board seldom sustain interaction over time. Service on institution-wide committees may be the most promising area for substantial interaction.

Notably, the percentage of independent institution presidents who reported that their faculty interact with governing board members through membership on board committees was more than twice that of public institution presidents.¹

¹ AGB's publication, *Policies, Practices, and Composition of Governing and Foundation Boards 2016*, indicates that about 21 percent of public governing boards and about 31 percent of independent boards include faculty members (voting and non-voting). Note: Governing board membership and committee membership may be distinct in some institutions.

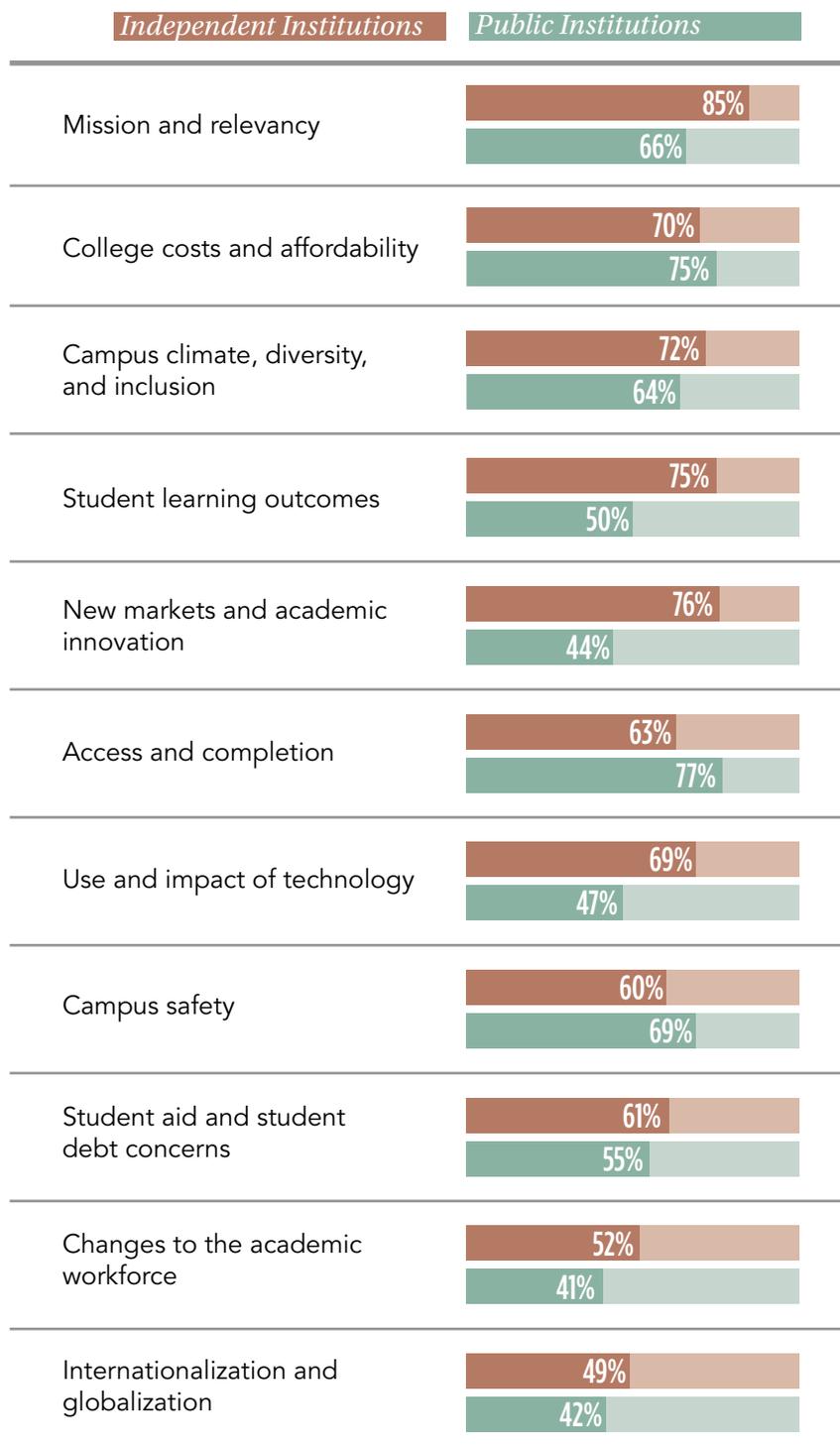
Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

Issues for Interaction

While opportunities to work together are important, the nature and content of those interactions often hold additional implications for strengthening shared governance. Accordingly, presidents were surveyed regarding the strategic issues around which board-faculty collaboration occur. (See Figure 4.)

FIGURE 4

WHEN DO FACULTY MEMBERS AND BOARDS COLLABORATE?



Strategic issue-focused collaboration can take a variety of forms, such as task forces, advisory panels, working groups, and special committees. Such collaboration can provide an appealing avenue for meaningful interaction between board members and faculty. Survey data suggest that opportunities for expanding this sort of work are available at many institutions.

Public and independent institution presidents differed when it came to the specific issues their boards and faculty focus on together. Three-quarters of public institution presidents reported that their faculty and governing board are engaged cooperatively on the subjects of access and completion, while less than two-thirds of independent institution presidents said the same. This is not surprising given public institutions' heightened focus on increasing degree completion to meet state and regional needs.

Presidents of independent institutions were more likely than presidents of public institutions to report that their faculty and governing board are engaged cooperatively on:

- New markets and academic innovation
- Student learning outcomes
- Use and impact of technology
- Mission and relevancy
- Changes to the academic workforce

On one hand, some of the differences between public and independent institutions may seem surprising. For example, although state governments increasingly demand that public institutions demonstrate productivity and effectiveness in exchange for important budget subsidies, presidents of those institutions were less likely to report that their boards and faculty are working together to address student learning outcomes. Likewise, state officials often see technology as a key tool to improve efficiency in higher education, but less than 50 percent of public institution presidents reported that their public boards and faculty are engaged on that subject. Additionally, changes in the academic workforce affect public and independent institutions equally, yet their boards and faculty are not working together at the same rate on this issue.

On the other hand, the differences between public and independent institutions in areas such as new markets and missions are more understandable. Many independent institutions, especially those with small enrollments and narrow missions, are pressed to innovate and adjust their missions to secure enrollment and financial health.

Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

FUELING EFFECTIVE SHARED GOVERNANCE

Board and Faculty Orientation

Shared governance runs on time, attention, and expertise—human resources. Though it is difficult to pinpoint why faculty and board members may not always understand each other’s work, insufficient education may play a role. Presidents responding to the survey were asked about new board member orientation. (See Table 5 and Figure 5.)

Overall, orientation is typically offered and largely required of new governing board members. However, nearly one-quarter of public institution presidents reported that their board’s orientation program is optional.

TABLE 5

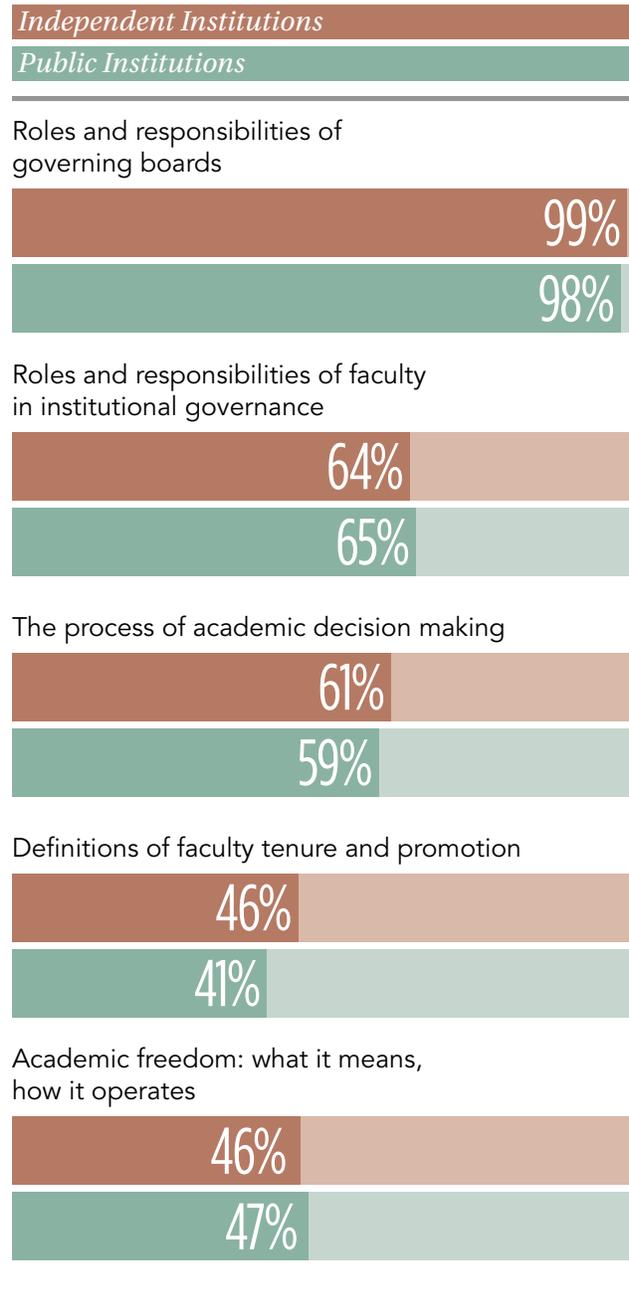
PREVALENCE OF NEW BOARD MEMBER ORIENTATION

Is an orientation program provided for new members of the board?

| | Independent Inst. | Public Inst. | All Inst. |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Yes, required | 82% | 54% | 74% |
| Yes, not required | 12% | 24% | 16% |
| No | 5% | 4% | 5% |
| Don’t know/NA | 1% | 17% | 6% |

FIGURE 5

WHAT’S COVERED IN ORIENTATION FOR NEW BOARD MEMBERS?



While virtually all presidents reported that board orientation covers the board’s own roles and responsibilities, less than two-thirds reported that their boards receive some orientation about faculty roles and responsibilities. About two in five boards receive no orientation to academic decision-making processes, and more than half receive no information about faculty tenure, promotion, and academic freedom. With little information about faculty work, board members beginning their service are unprepared to support effective shared governance over time.

Fully 80 percent of public institution presidents and over 90 percent of independent institution presidents reported that faculty orientation is required in some form.² Figure 6 shows the extent to which presidents report faculty orientation addresses fundamental shared governance policies and practices.

In a notable minority of public and independent institutions (nearly one-third), orientation to the faculty’s own responsibilities and opportunities regarding shared governance is overlooked. Moreover, while many new governing board members learn little about faculty work during orientation, new faculty members also appear to learn little about the work of governing boards.

Without education, neither board members nor faculty can be expected to fully understand each other’s role in shared governance. Importantly, a substantial number of survey respondents noted the need for greater role clarity among those involved in shared governance, something that can be addressed in orientation.

FIGURE 6

WHAT’S COVERED IN ORIENTATION FOR NEW FACULTY MEMBERS?



² Presidents reported at rates of 38 percent for independent institutions and 53 percent for public institutions that part-time faculty are not required to attend orientation. By contrast, more than 90 percent of public and independent institution presidents reported that tenure-track and full-time non-tenure-track faculty are required to participate.

Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

Faculty Contingency, Collective Bargaining, and Shared Governance

Today's faculty is distinct in important ways compared to the faculty of a generation ago.³ While the shift toward increased reliance on adjunct labor in the classroom has been gradual and uneven across higher education, its impact on both the culture and the practice of shared governance is now considerable at many institutions. To explore that impact, the survey asked presidents about the growth of non-tenure-track faculty at their institutions over the past five years. (See Table 6.)

TABLE 6

RECENT GROWTH IN NON-TENURE-TRACK FACULTY

Over the past five years, to what extent have the numbers of non-tenure-track faculty grown on your campus?

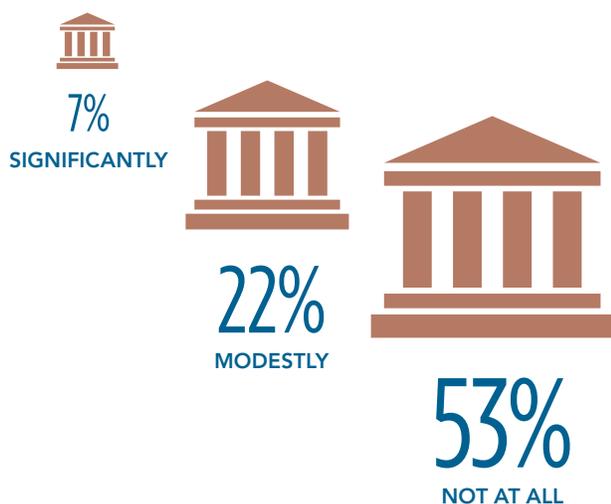
| | Independent Institutions | Public Institutions | All Institutions |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Significantly | 9% | 9% | 9% |
| Modestly | 48% | 65% | 53% |
| Not at all | 43% | 26% | 38% |

³ U.S. Department of Education data indicate that between 1970 and 2013, U.S. full-time faculty fell from over three-quarters of the total to just over half, and only about one-quarter of the national faculty is now on the tenure track.

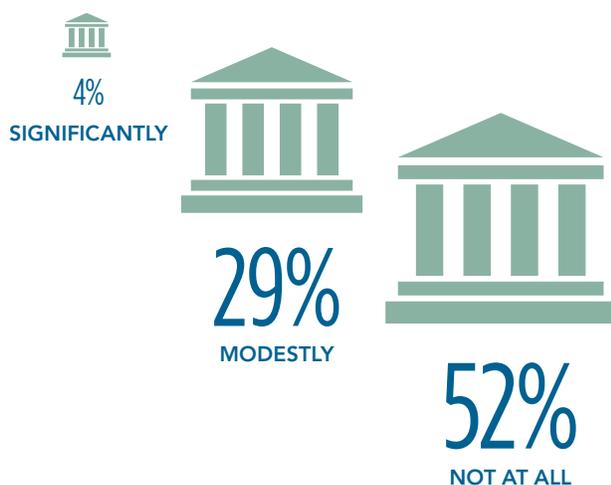
FIGURE 7

HOW MUCH HAS THE BOARD'S POLICY ON SHARED GOVERNANCE CHANGED TO REFLECT THE CHANGING ACADEMIC WORKFORCE?

Independent Institutions



Public Institutions



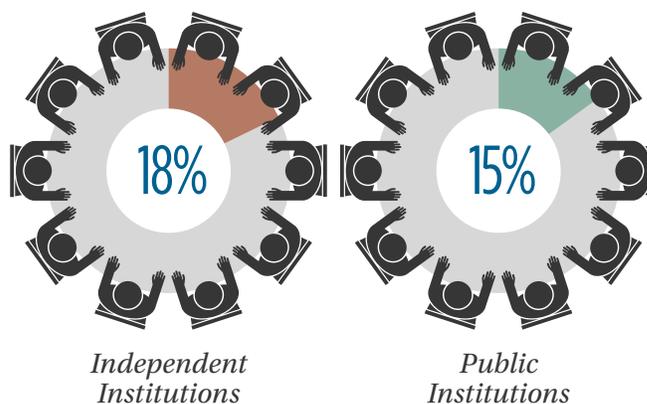
The small proportion of presidents that reported significant growth in non-tenure-track positions (about nine percent over the last five years) is unsurprising. The growth in these positions across higher education has occurred steadily over the course of more than four decades. Yet, nearly two-thirds of presidents of public institutions reported that their non-tenure-track faculty has continued to grow, compared to slightly less than half of presidents of independent institutions.

The survey of presidents asked whether shared governance policies have changed as a result of these shifts in the academic workforce. (See Figure 7.)

While one-quarter of all presidents reported modest changes in recent years, most reported that their board's policies on shared governance remained static in response to changes in the academic workforce. More than one in six presidents reported they had no board policy or statement on shared governance. (See Figure 8.)

FIGURE 8

MY BOARD DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY OR STATEMENT ON SHARED GOVERNANCE:



Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

For many institutions, a disconnect appears between what is required for shared governance to be effective and the number of faculty members available to participate.⁴ Often, responsibility for faculty shared governance is now more concentrated within a declining proportion of full-time and tenure-track faculty, and shared governance policies have not been adjusted in the face of these widespread changes. In that vein, AGB's National Commission on College and University Board Governance warned: "If the faculty voice continues to come only from relatively small, homogenous groups, then we should expect tensions to escalate further in the coming years."

However, reduced faculty capacity for shared governance represents only one hazard related to contemporary faculty work structures. Part-time faculty expansion and recent legal decisions on

the status of full-time, non-tenure-track faculty in independent institutions have both contributed to growth in faculty collective bargaining. A key distinction between faculty collective bargaining and shared governance is that unions advocate in the interest of a particular group, whereas shared governance advances broader institutional goals. Presidents were surveyed about the presence and impact of collective-bargaining agreements on shared governance. (See Table 7.)

As might be expected, presidents at public institutions were more likely than independent institution presidents to report at least one faculty collective-bargaining agreement. More public institution presidents also reported that a collective-bargaining agreement affects shared governance.

TABLE 7

INFLUENCE OF COLLECTIVE-BARGAINING AGREEMENTS ON FACULTY PARTICIPATION IN SHARED GOVERNANCE

Is faculty involvement in institutional governance determined or affected by a collective-bargaining agreement?

| | Independent Institutions | Public Institutions | All Institutions |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Yes | 3% | 30% | 11% |
| No (there is a collective-bargaining agreement in place but it has no effect on shared governance) | 12% | 19% | 14% |
| Does not apply (no collective bargaining for faculty) | 84% | 51% | 75% |

⁴ In response to this survey, only 43 percent of independent presidents and 39 percent of public presidents reported that part-time faculty are permitted to participate in their faculty governing body. These numbers should not be interpreted to reflect the degree to which those who are given the opportunity actually do volunteer their time. Unlike full-time faculty, part-time faculty are compensated on a per-course basis, so any participation in shared governance constitutes unpaid service to the institution.

FIDUCIARY LEADERSHIP FOR EFFECTIVE SHARED GOVERNANCE

As legal fiduciaries, governing boards not only hold responsibility for making wise decisions, but they also must ensure the currency and reliability of policies that facilitate decision making, such as those guiding shared governance. Accordingly, the survey asked board members about the importance of shared governance as a component of decision making at their institutions and in the governance of American higher education more generally. (See Figure 9.)

The vast majority of all board members responded that shared governance is either very important or moderately important at their institution. However, fewer than half of all board members said it is very important in American higher education.

What these paradoxical data mean is not entirely clear, although they are reminiscent of the opinion that “I like my Congressman but dislike Congress.” Do a considerable portion of governing board members believe their institution is exceptional in how it employs shared governance? Were some board members more tactful regarding the importance of shared governance in their institutions compared to higher education generally? Some board members may not be enamored of the concept of shared governance, but see it working sufficiently at their institution, so as the adage goes: “If it’s not broken, don’t fix it.”

FIGURE 9

AMONG BOARD MEMBERS, HOW IMPORTANT IS SHARED GOVERNANCE...

In decision making at my institution?



VERY IMPORTANT



MODERATELY IMPORTANT



NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT

In colleges and universities across the U.S.?



VERY IMPORTANT



MODERATELY IMPORTANT



NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT

Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

Many important institutional policies and practices undergo regular review to ensure they remain well suited to the challenges of the day. The survey asked presidents whether their shared governance processes receive regular evaluation. (See Table 8.)

Less than one-third of presidents affirmed that their institution regularly reviews shared governance processes for effectiveness.

TABLE 8

PRESIDENTIAL ACCOUNTING OF SHARED GOVERNANCE POLICY REVIEW

My institution/system regularly reviews the effectiveness of its shared governance processes.

| | Independent Institutions | Public Institutions | All Institutions |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Strongly agree | 5% | 8% | 6% |
| Agree | 27% | 21% | 25% |
| Neutral | 31% | 27% | 30% |
| Disagree | 30% | 42% | 33% |
| Strongly disagree | 8% | 3% | 6% |

In addition to asking presidents about shared governance assessment, the survey of governing board members asked about the durability of shared governance in respondents' institutions. Specifically, the survey asked board members whether their institution's shared governance model holds up under unusual situations. (See Table 9.)

TABLE 9

BOARD MEMBER PERCEPTIONS OF THE DURABILITY OF SHARED GOVERNANCE

My institution's/system's shared governance model holds up under unusual situations.

| | Independent Institutions | Public Institutions | All Institutions |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Strongly agree | 23% | 20% | 23% |
| Agree | 47% | 43% | 47% |
| Neutral | 20% | 23% | 21% |
| Disagree | 7% | 9% | 8% |
| Strongly disagree | 2% | 6% | 3% |

Nearly seven in 10 governing board members reported confidence in their shared governance models when tested. These data are difficult to interpret when juxtaposed with information from presidents indicating that less than one-third of institutions regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their shared governance processes. The difference suggests at least some board members' confidence in shared governance rests in something other than a formal assessment.

AGB's National Commission on College and University Board Governance recommended boards take steps to intentionally reinvigorate faculty shared governance:

"Every board must ask for a review of the institution's policies and practices of shared governance with faculty in order to ensure that such policies are appropriate to the realities of the current workforce, reinforce the delegated authority of faculty for academic policy, and ensure that processes for consultation are clear and are routinely followed by all responsible parties. Boards must ensure that their policies for shared governance include means of addressing topics that transect faculty, presidential, and board responsibility (such as program closures)."

Shared Governance: Is OK Good Enough?

A Note about Shared Governance at Public Universities and Systems

Results of special significance to public university boards, faculty, and administrators surfaced throughout the two surveys. These results paint a less upbeat picture of shared governance in public higher education. On many of the survey questions, presidents and board members of public institutions and systems gave fewer positive responses and more neutral or negative responses than did their counterparts at independent institutions.

For example, 33 percent of public board members strongly agreed that the president and chief academic officer support shared governance, compared to 45 percent of independent board members. According to presidents, faculty and board member understanding of each other's responsibilities and authority are lower at public institutions than at independent institutions. One-quarter of public institution presidents reported that their board members have slight to no understanding of faculty responsibilities, compared to 17 percent of independents. Over one-third (37 percent) of public institution presidents said that faculty had little to no understanding of board responsibilities, compared to just over one-quarter (27 percent) of independent institution presidents. With new member orientation less often required for public institution boards than for independent institution boards (54 percent compared to 82 percent), there is less opportunity to

increase the board's understanding of faculty responsibilities and role in shared governance at public institutions.

Public institution presidents reported greater growth in the number of non-tenure-track faculty in the last five years, greater presence of collective bargaining, and fewer reviews of shared governance processes—a combination of factors that can present special challenges to effective shared governance. They also reported that many faculty and board members do not collaborate in addressing some of the most critical issues facing higher education—campus climate, student learning, academic innovation, use of technology, and changes to the academic workforce.

In key ways, public institution governing boards, presidents, and faculty face fundamentally different challenges than their independent counterparts when it comes to shared governance. For example, mandatory board member education often requires enactment by a state legislative body, and the difficulty of maintaining clear distinctions between collective bargaining and shared governance can be substantial. The special challenges of shared governance pertaining to many public institutions may serve to emphasize the importance of increased collaboration on a host of crucial subjects among governing boards, presidents, and faculty.

AN ESSENTIAL ASSET, OK PERFORMANCE

Modern understandings of shared governance have been influenced by the vast and enduring impact of the American Association of University Professors' 1966 *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*. Fifty years ago, AGB had the opportunity to help shape this seminal statement, and we are committed to ensuring the effectiveness of shared governance in the years to come.

Governing boards, presidents, and faculty can do more to develop shared governance systems that facilitate everyday decisions and strengthen extraordinarily difficult ones. Along with presidents, boards can collaborate with faculty more often on substantive matters. Presidents can promote strong shared governance by ensuring that boards and faculty understand the work of the other and its value to the institution.

More challenging—for boards, presidents, and faculty together—will be addressing the significantly reduced faculty availability for shared governance in many institutions. Boards can contribute practical suggestions and political cover to ensure that administrators and faculty work together to find creative solutions to this complex problem.

For some institutions, solutions to the faculty capacity issue may require multi-year efforts to adjust faculty contracts and expectations to better meet the needs of shared governance. For others, presidents and boards might encourage faculty to examine their governance structures and bylaws to ensure that they reflect new realities. Some

institutions have begun efforts to better incorporate full-time, non-tenure-track faculty and even part-time faculty into shared governance. Boards should understand and have the opportunity to inform those strategic decisions as well. While such endeavors may prove challenging, they address an overarching need in many institutions to strengthen shared governance.

Many boards may find it helpful to consider the care of shared governance as one component of their fiduciary responsibility of care for the institution. Most board members responding to the survey expressed support for their faculty's delegated authority, acknowledged the importance of shared governance to their institution, and showed confidence in their systems of shared governance, but not all of the data tell the same story.

Many presidents reported less confidence than board members in the durability of their shared governance systems, and most reported that their shared governance processes do not undergo regular review. It remains unclear whether board members' expressions of confidence in shared governance are evidence-based, or whether their default appraisal is that shared governance is "OK" unless proven otherwise.

Governing boards' fiduciary duty of care for their institutions entails ensuring that decision-making policies—including those guiding shared governance—are sound. Reasonably, boards attending to the care of such policies might conduct assessments, make changes from time to time, and

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ensure that shared governance is implemented as intended. Whether boards exhibit sufficient care for shared governance, and whether board members' expressions of confidence in their models of shared governance are based in appropriate knowledge or experience, remains unclear. As of the time of this report's publication, AGB is assembling focus groups and case studies to shed light on the nuanced ways in which shared governance works in practice and how it can be strengthened.

If it ever worked easily in the past (and such an assumption is speculative), in today's environment, shared governance requires

renewed effort to function well. Governing boards and presidents report strong interest in developing high-functioning shared governance. Data from these two surveys point both to the goal and to steps for improvement.

Shared governance should be an essential institutional asset, but careful board, president, and faculty leadership is needed to prevent it from becoming a liability. We encourage governing boards, along with their presidents and faculty, to question whether OK performance is good enough when it comes to shared governance.

Questions for governing boards and presidents to consider:

1. Have governing board members received sufficient information regarding the nature of faculty work, including the faculty role in shared governance? Have members of the faculty been sufficiently educated as to the governing board's role?
2. How well do members of the governing board understand the value that faculty bring to institutional decision making through shared governance?
3. How might the governing board ensure a rigorous assessment of shared governance policies, practices, and functioning at the institution?
4. In what ways—and on which important subjects—might the institution benefit from more robust collaboration among the governing board, administration, and faculty?
5. If change regarding shared governance policies or practices is important, how can the board set the table for a constructive process?

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