

Association *of*  
Governing Boards *of*  
Universities and Colleges  
—— A Centennial History ——



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## Acknowledgements

### Design

BonoTom Studio

### Editing

The following stories appeared in the 2006 compilation: “AGB’s 60th Birthday: “An Unlikely Story” (Part I); “AGB...An Unlikely Story (Part II); “AGB at 70: From Survival to Service”; and “Growing Pains Lead to Major Accomplishments.” The editing of these was done in 2006 by former AGB Senior Editor Charles S. Clark and the production was done by AGB Publications Editorial Assistant Emily Jacobs.

### Writing

“AGB Celebrates 100 Years” was adapted from an earlier AGB publication with additional writing by Elena Loveland, editor-in-chief of AGB’s *Trusteeship* magazine.

“The Recent History of AGB: 2006–2021” was written by Elena Loveland, editor-in-chief of *Trusteeship* magazine, and former AGB editorial assistant Madeline Taub.

“AGB Today and Tomorrow” was written by Elena Loveland, editor-in-chief of *Trusteeship* magazine.



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# INTRODUCTION

**T**HE ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNING BOARDS OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES (AGB) is the only national organization providing university and college presidents, board chairs, and individual board members of both public and private institutions and institutionally related foundations with the resources they need to enhance their effectiveness. College and university chief executives and board leaders are responsible for one of our nation's most valuable and time-honored resources: education. In partnership with their governing boards, chief executives strengthen their institutions and preserve the ideals of excellent and affordable education for current and future generations.

The hallmark of this unparalleled system of higher education is autonomy. The work of higher education governing boards—made up of citizen trustees—has become the model for much of the nonprofit sector. Successful board performance is vital to protecting institutional autonomy and to promoting the rich and varied traditions of our colleges and universities. For 100 years, AGB has provided service to boards and higher education leaders. Since 1921, AGB has offered programs and resources that provide critical, informed context for higher education as it confronts new challenges and opportunities. AGB connects board members and institutional leaders to one another to solve problems, advance best practices, and share the latest thinking in governance. Developing solutions to the contemporary challenges we face in higher education governance requires the same commitment and enthusiasm we have demonstrated for 100 years.

In recognition of the 100th anniversary year of the founding of the association, AGB is releasing this special publication compiling the history of AGB. In 2006, AGB re-published three existing histories of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, which are included in this single publication. The first is a two-part history prepared by J.L. Zwingle, AGB's first executive director, and originally published in two parts in the November/December 1981 and the January/February 1982 issues

of *AGB Reports*, marking the association's 60th anniversary. The second is an article prepared by Peter Hartman, then-coordinator of On-Campus Programs and the Trustee Information Center at AGB, which originally was published in the January/February 1991 issue of *AGB Reports*, marking the association's 70th anniversary. The third is a portion of the 2005 AGB annual report, the text of which marked the end of the 13-year AGB presidency of Richard T. Ingram. The material overlaps in a few places that treat the same time periods, though each adds a different selection of detail. Aside from some modest adjustments made for style consistency, however, the three texts are reproduced faithfully.

To honor AGB's 100th anniversary, AGB has added additional articles to this document including the following: a special section of the March/April issue of *Trusteeship* magazine "AGB Celebrates 100 Years," which includes a historical timeline of AGB milestones and a short early history of the organization; an article that appeared in the November/December 2019 issue of *Trusteeship* magazine,

"The Dartmouth Decision: Where Trustees Come from and How We Must Lead" about the monumental court case that solidified the role of trustees in U.S. higher education; and two new articles specifically created for this special 100th anniversary publication: "The Recent History of AGB: 2006–2021" and "AGB Today and Tomorrow." ■

# AGB CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

**T**HE YEAR 2021 marks an exceptional milestone in the history of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)—the association was officially founded 100 years ago. The association's development has evolved to reflect the changes in higher education's governance system over the last 100 years. As AGB celebrates 100 years of service to boards—public and private, institutional and system, governing and advisory, and also including institutionally related foundation boards—now is a good time to look at how the association has changed with the times.

## A Short Early History of AGB

From its founding in 1921 until the early 1960s, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges was a loose affiliation of board members who took turns providing leadership and direction necessary to hold the organization together. The early organization operated as the Association of Governing Boards of State Universities and Allied Institutions, and its membership was open only to boards of public institutions. With the purpose of promoting contact

among members, and without a salaried staff, the association's activities were limited to annual meetings of its various committees. Judge Ora Wildermuth, a trustee of Indiana University and one of AGB's presidents during the 1930s, was partial to AGB because “we have no ideals or objectives except to benefit by our contacts with each other.”

## Voting Delegates

At the annual meetings, a quasi-legislative tone prevailed, and proposals were voted upon by the “delegates” in attendance. The delegates did not represent their boards or institutions in an official capacity, and the resolutions they passed carried no weight outside the meetings.

During the 1950s, recurring resolution topics included pledges of support for preserving the “American way of life” and preparing our colleges and universities to be leaders in civil defense. At the 1960 annual meeting, it was resolved that the U.S. would “achieve ultimate victory over communism if we properly educate America's youth.” Some other examples:

“Be it resolved that it is urged that governing boards encourage better organization of public information emanating from their administrative offices.”

“Be it resolved that boards of trustees and regents stand firmly for recognized courses in the major fields of general education as necessary parts of preparation for special-



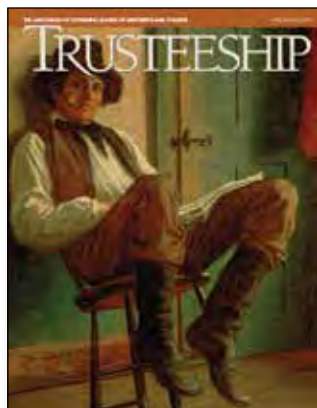
**AGB**  
100 YEARS  
—Strengthening—  
Governance

**1921** A group of trustees and higher education leaders meet with the express goal of establishing an organization to gather them regularly. AGB is formed.

**1923** First annual meeting held. Among the papers presented: “What the University Can Do for the State.”

**1941** The 18th National Conference is held two months before Pearl Harbor. Thirty-two member boards represented; presentations included a session on how states finance colleges and universities.

**1942** The Honorable Ora Wildermuth named administrative head of AGB, transitioning from an all-volunteer organization since its founding in 1921.



ization, especially in the fields of agriculture, engineering, and their related branches.”

Some of AGB’s standing committees in 1960 reflected an odd dichotomy of issues: Space Utilization, Entrance Requirements, Legislative and Intergovernmental Relations, Public Relations, Regent Responsibility for University Participation in Education Abroad, Scholarship and Tuition Studies, and Television in Higher Education.

Members were concerned about the movement to consolidate existing institutionally based governing boards into statewide boards. AGB’s Committee on Legislation and Intergovernmental Relations resolved that the trend was “inimical to the best interest of higher education.” Members vowed to go “directly to highly placed officers of government to explain and justify our mission,” even though Arti-

cle I of the AGB constitution at the time mandated that “no substantial part of the association’s activities...shall involve the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation.”

AGB’s executive committee then resolved to “fight the movement to destroy local governance of higher education, elect a few leaders in each state who understand higher education, and will be willing to fight for it in the state legislatures.”

### New Headquarters

Following the death of AGB secretary and Iowa State Board of Education member Richard Plock in 1959, University of Colorado Regent Virginia Blue assumed the newly created position of executive director. With membership at a new high of 76,

AGB’s headquarters were moved from Plock’s home in Burlington, Iowa, to Blue’s in Denver. AGB was

incorporated in Colorado in 1960 with the purpose of operating “exclusively for educational, scientific, and charitable purposes.”

In 1963, the AGB Executive Committee voted to move the association’s headquarters to Washington, D.C. AGB President and Texas A&M Regent John Newton said, “We believe that the growth of AGB during the past few years has brought the association to the point that it can take its place with leading education agencies and organizations in our nation’s capital.” He cited three advantages in moving to D.C.: the presence of federal agencies concerned with higher education, many leading higher education agencies, and the executive offices of numerous philanthropic foundations.

**1949** Richard Plock, board secretary—treasurer becomes a part-time executive for AGB.

**1951** AGB marks 30 years of service; Grayson Kirk, acting president of Columbia University, speaks at the national conference on “Education for Citizenship.”

**1952** Papers presented at the National Conference include: “Proper Relationship Between Governing Boards and Administrative Officers of Colleges and Universities,” by Arthur Adams, president of the American Council on Education; “Academic Tenure,” by Dr. Ralph Himstead, American Association of University Professors, and “Education Television.”

**1959** Virginia Blue named AGB executive director.

**1963** J.L. Zwingle named AGB executive director.

**1964** AGB launches AGB Press and releases its first book, *Handbook for College and University Regents*.

**1966** AGB’s Board of Directors creates the AGB Council of Presidents.



At the same time, committee members voted to relocate in Washington, D.C., a proposal to open AGB membership to boards of independent institutions was voted down. Soon after, it was pointed out that the Carnegie Corporation “might be more interested” in assisting AGB if it changed its membership policy. A unanimous vote to open membership to independent institutions followed.

To quell concerns that boards of independent institutions would in time “dominate” the association, it was agreed that only six of the 15 executive committee slots be made available to them.

Ironically, AGB’s first member from the independent sector, Athens College in Athens, Alabama, soon became “too big of a

financial burden” on the Methodist Church and was turned over to the state of Alabama. Athens State College enrolls 2,100 students.

After receiving a \$75,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation, AGB made the move to D.C., and J.L. Zwingle, a vice president at Cornell University, became AGB’s executive vice president.

### Building Optimism

The early 1960s stand out as an especially significant period in AGB history. It was a time when the association’s continued existence was in doubt, but with the help of foundation money, membership and productivity blossomed.

Building legitimacy for AGB with Washington’s higher education community was a

priority. Zwingle, however, encountered “the disturbing cynicism about the value of the lay board at any level of education, but particularly higher education. According to Zwingle, the feeling among colleagues was that “the concept of lay trusteeship is fundamentally sound, but it is better not to make much of it.”

Initial efforts to establish cooperative programs with other higher education associations were unsuccessful. In a meeting with American Council on Education (ACE) President Logal Wilson, Zwingle outlined ways ACE could help “in a great new venture,” but he was told he was on his own. The next issue of *AGB Reports* nevertheless announced that Wilson and ACE “look forward to close cooperation with AGB and Dr. Zwingle...”



**1966** The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) joins the American Council on Education (ACE) in the formulation of the American Association of University Professors’ (AAUP) *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* and “commends” the statement to AGB members. This statement was jointly formulated by AAUP, ACE, and AGB. In October 1966, the board of directors of the ACE took action by which its council “recognizes the statement as a significant step forward in the clarification of the respective roles of governing boards, faculties, and administrations,” and “commends it to the institutions which are members of the Council.” The Council of the AAUP adopted the statement in October 1966, and the 53rd Annual Meeting endorsed it in April 1967. In November 1966, the executive committee of the AGB took action by which that organization also “recognizes the statement as a significant step forward in the clarification of the respective roles of governing boards, faculties, and administrations,” and “commends it to the governing boards which are members of the Association.” (In April 1990, the Council of the AAUP adopted several changes in language in order to remove gender-specific references from the original text.)

**1973** Robert L. Gale becomes president of AGB.

**1974** The Trustee Information Clearinghouse and library on academic governance are created at AGB.



The speeches and debates held at annual meetings and reprinted in the newsletter in the early 1960s were vague and ceremonial, lacking much practical information board members could use to formulate effective policies for their institutions.

Reports chronicled, at great length, appointments to the various committees and the social activities of members. If AGB was to survive and become a viable organization a “seriousness of purpose” needed to supplant the “reunion atmosphere” of AGB’s activities.

The stony reaction AGB received in the nation’s capital produced little optimism for the association’s future. Zwingle asked the executive committee if he should “plan an orderly demise or wait for the sheriff.”

### Helping Trustees

A step toward becoming an educational resource for trustees was taken with the development of the “School for Regents” in 1961. AGB promised the “school” would offer a wealth of practical advice with participants’ “own interest.” The four program sessions included fiscal and legislative matters, administrative responsibilities, academic responsibilities, and public relations.

A significant shift in the association’s approach was about to occur. Zwingle and

## AGB Board Chairs Since 2009

<b>2009–2010</b>	Honorable Cynthia A. Baldwin/Duquesne University
<b>2010–2011</b>	James M. Weaver/Gettysburg College
<b>2011–2012</b>	James M. Weaver/Gettysburg College
<b>2012–2013</b>	Honorable James E. Geringer/Western Governors University
<b>2013–2014</b>	Honorable James E. Geringer/Western Governors University
<b>2014–2015</b>	Yvonne R. Jackson/Simmons College
<b>2015–2016</b>	Yvonne R. Jackson/Simmons College
<b>2016–2017</b>	David W. Miles/Drake University
<b>2017–2018</b>	David W. Miles/Drake University
<b>2018–2019</b>	David W. Miles/Drake University
<b>2019–2020</b>	Shauna Ryder Diggs/University of Michigan
<b>2020–2021</b>	Shauna Ryder Diggs/University of Michigan

## AGB Presidents and CEOs

<b>1921–1942</b>	Volunteer-based organization
<b>1942–1949</b>	Honorable Ora Wildermuth
<b>1949–1959</b>	Richard Plock, Board Secretary–Treasurer (part-time executive)
<b>1959–1964</b>	Virginia Blue (Executive Director)
<b>1963–1973</b>	J.L. Zwingle (Executive Director)
<b>1973–1992</b>	Robert L. Gale (President)
<b>1992–2005</b>	Richard T. “Tom” Ingram
<b>2005–2019</b>	Richard D. Legon
<b>2019–Present</b>	Henry V. Stoevers

**1976** AGB launches a project on new campus financial strategies.

**1977** The first board self-study workshop is conducted by AGB.

**1979** AGB launches its Presidential Search Consultation Service.

**1980** The Distinguished Service Award is established; it is given annually to a board member from a public and an independent institution.

**1982** *The Nature of Trusteeship: The Role and Responsibilities of College and University Boards*, by John Nason, is published.

**1984** *Presidents Make a Difference*, a report on a three-year study of how trustees can help strengthen academic presidents chaired by former University of California president Clark Kerr.

**1985** AGB holds the first Institute for Board Chairs and Presidents of Independent Institutions, AGB’s longest-running activity for independent institutions.

others realized that people were not really interested in AGB as an organization; rather, they wanted information that was not available elsewhere. The gatherings of “delegates” became “conferences” and “workshops.” A calculated movement away from being an organization of trustees and toward becoming an organization for trustees was afoot.

AGB’s first published book, *Handbook for College and University Regents*, was released in 1964. Its intent was to “serve as a stimulus to all board members to ferret out and verbalize the policies and practices of their board and institution.” The handbook described meeting formats and agendas and discussed the board’s role in academic, financial, and student affairs, as well as athletics.

At the 1964 annual meeting, University of North Carolina President William Fri-



day announced that for AGB “the door was opened for a more autonomous, more useful, and more productive and significant possibility of service.” He proclaimed that

“the world of American higher education looks to this association with new hope and expectancy.”

### Activism Spurs Service

AGB’s emergence among higher education association coincided with the growth of activism on America’s campuses. Trustees were under scrutiny as never before, and a forum to exchange information on how to respond to these new challenges was in demand.

Attendance at the annual meetings grew, as did membership. Campus unrest became the central focus of the association’s activities through the 1970s. From 1966 to 1970, annual meeting themes included: “The Changing Student Mood,” “Crisis on the Campus: Import for Governance,” “Boundaries of Academic Freedom,” and “The Trustee Role in Stabilizing the Campus.”

**1988** AGB drives the creation of a new organization, the National Center for Nonprofit Boards (now BoardSource), with Independent Sector as a partner.

**1989** *The Guardians*, a landmark study of what governing boards do and how well they do it, written by Clark Kerr and Marian L. Gade, is published. It becomes AGB’s all-time best seller.

**1992** Richard T. “Tom” Ingram becomes AGB president and CEO.

**1993** *Trusteeship* magazine launches.

**1996** AGB’s Foundation Forum, convening foundation leaders and board members, is held for the first time.

**1996** AGB convenes a National Commission on the Academic Presidency.

**1998** The AGB Board of Directors releases the *AGB Statement on Institutional Governance*.

**2000** Center for Public Trusteeship and Governance is established to strengthen ties between higher education and state governments.

**2001** The AGB board approves the statement *Governing in the Public Trust: External Influences on Colleges and Universities*.

**2003** The publishing of *Strategic Leadership in Academic Affairs* culminates two-year project on boards’ responsibilities for academic affairs.

**2004** AGB Benchmarking Service is launched. AGB publishes *Endowment Management: A Practical Guide*.

**2004** AGB relaunches John W. Nason Award for Trusteeship; Distinguished Service Award is discontinued (47 trustees have received DSA between 1980–2003). The Nason Award will be given to any board, institution, organization, government body, or individual demonstrating the following: (1) exceptional leadership and initiative, (2) distinctive scholarly contributions that have made a difference in strengthening the institution of citizen trusteeship in higher education, (3) unusual courage in the face of adversity or heroic achievement in a challenging situation or for an endeavor that greatly benefited a college or university and its community in a way that serves as a model for other boards to emulate.



## AGB Vision, Mission, and Values

### Vision

College, university, and foundation board members are indispensable, strategic partners with institutions to fulfill their unique commitments to society, advance student success and well-being, and enhance institutional vitality.

### Mission

AGB empowers college, university, and foundation boards and board members to govern with knowledge and confidence, providing guidance and thought leadership through expert services and resources.

### Values

- Dedication to the development of the institution of citizen trusteeship in higher education
- Responsive and high-quality service to its members
- Respect for members and colleagues in all interactions and transactions
- Collaboration within AGB and with other organizations
- Adherence to the highest ethical, legal, and moral standards in all of its work

**2005** Richard D. Legon becomes AGB president and CEO.

**2006** AGB's best-selling *Making the Grade*, also referred to as "AGB's Little Yellow Book," is published.

**2006** *The Leadership Imperative* report from the AGB Task Force on the State of the Presidency in American Higher Education is released, advocating that presidents and boards work together as partners in leadership.

**2006** AGB launches "The Cost Project" to engage the issues of cost and pricing. The project results in four key papers addressing strengthening board capacity for financial oversight, and leads to AGB's work in strategic finance.

**2006** AGB establishes its Board Education & Consulting Service (BECS). BECS evolved to become AGB Consulting to offer a broader range of customized member services.

**2007** The AGB Board of Directors releases its *Statement on Board Accountability*, which clarifies the expectations for boards and trustees in areas including fiscal integrity, presidential compensation and assessment, board performance, and educational quality.

**2008** *Sounding Boards: Advisory Councils in Higher Education* is published.

**2009** The AGB Board of Directors releases the *Statement on Conflict of Interest*, which contains 12 principles for boards to consider in writing their conflict policies.

**2009** AGB conducts wide-ranging survey of higher education governance practices and policies, from trustee assessment to presidential compensation.

**2009** AGB releases the *Illustrative Policy on Intercollegiate Athletics for Boards and Presidents*, providing specific policy guidance to boards and academic leaders on the oversight responsibilities for intercollegiate athletics.

**2010** AGB Search, LLC, a search firm dedicated to conducting searches for college and university presidents, system heads, CEOs of coordinating boards and institutionally related foundations, and other senior higher education positions, brings AGB back into the executive search business.

Board members were urged to redefine the purposes and goals of their institutions to help “nurture academic freedom and repel the attacks of society on academic institutions.”

Following Zwingle’s retirement in 1973, Robert L. Gale, a former Carleton College vice president and Peace Corps official, was appointed president of AGB. At the same time, a four-year grant in excess of \$1 million arrived from the Lilly Endowment. New programs and publications increased, and the association blossomed.

The centerpiece of the Lilly-funded effort was the development of the Board-Mentor Program, a board self-assessment workshop utilized by more than 350 boards. Other important projects of the 1970s included the studies on the board’s role in financial affairs, presidential



selection, and presidential assessment; filmstrip on tenure, budgeting, and fund-raising; and publications on many other important topics, as well as the first-ever

nationwide survey of the composition and characteristics of governing boards.

The momentum created by the Lilly grant continues today. By the early 1990s, virtually all of AGB’s available publications at that time were produced during the 1980s. Other products of the 1980s included the establishment of AGB’s Office of Public Policy, the Institute for Trustee Leadership, the National Center for Non-profit Boards, which is now named Board-Source—a now-independent organization for trustees of nonprofit organizations—and numerous workshops, seminars, and panels.

Until the 1960s, the public took little interest in academic trusteeship, and little was written or known about the subject. The enormous jump in college and university enrollment as the Baby Boom generation reached adulthood and the activism

**2010** Report on how boards oversee educational quality is released, as part of a larger project on Governance for Student Success.

**2011** AGB celebrates 90 years of service to higher education governing boards and academic leaders.

**2011** AGB released the report, *Front and Center*, calling for the federal government to rethink its role in higher education and put more emphasis on support for student aid.

**2013** After AGB’s successful three-year campaign, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) decided to exempt college and university board members from the commission’s oversight rules that changed the definition of a “municipal advisor.”

**2013** AGB expands its services to presidents in order to strengthen the partnership between boards and presidents.

**2013** AGB establishes the National Commission on College and University Board Governance, which calls for improvements to the oversight function of trustees, which culminates in the publication, *Consequential Boards: Adding Value Where It Matters Most*.

**2014** AGB is awarded an 18-month grant from Lumina Foundation to advance its work on student success at public institutions.

**2014** AGB releases the report, *Top Strategic Issues Facing HBCUs, Now and into the Future*.

**2014** AGB creates AGB University, an online guide to good governance to provide on-the-go resources for the digital age.

**2015** AGB publishes its *Board of Directors’ Statement on the Fiduciary Duties of Governing Board Members*.

**2017** AGB launches the “Guardians Initiative” in an effort to combat the public’s skepticism towards the value of higher education.

**2017** AGB issues a statement in response to President Trump’s decision to rescind Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). AGB emphasized the negative impacts rescinding this program would have for many students and urged President Trump’s administration to find a more permanent solution.

**2017** *Trusteeship Radio*, a podcast series, is launched (now podcasts have been renamed as simply “podcasts” without the former moniker).





**2018** AGB releases the 2018 *Trustee Index, Affordability and Value: The Governance Lens*, the second of three survey reports on board members' views on the most pressing issues facing higher education and the institutions they serve, conducted with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and in collaboration with Gallup, Inc.

**2019** AGB publishes the report *Reclaiming Higher Education's Leadership in Support of Civil Education*.

**2019** Henry V. Stoevers named AGB president and CEO.

**2020** AGB rebrands, releases a new logo, and launches its digital-first publishing strategy, which involves digitizing books and launching a new website.

**2020** The digital edition of *Trusteeship* magazine launches to complement the print edition and text-only articles on the AGB website.

**2020** AGB releases the *AGB 2020 Trustee Index: Concern Deepens for the Future of Higher Education*, the last of three survey reports on board members' view on the most pressing issues facing higher education and the institutions they serve, conducted with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and in collaboration with Gallup, Inc.

**2020** AGB publishes *The Urgency of Now: HBCUs at a Crossroads*, concluding a multiyear project, "Initiative for Strengthening HBCU Governance and Leadership," with support from the Kresge Foundation.

**2020** AGB offers its first virtual National Conference on Trusteeship.

**2020** AGB launches the Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (JDE&I) Initiative in response to the national protests over racial injustice that exposed the systemic inequities on campuses and in broader communities.

**2021** AGB publishes *The Principles of Trusteeship*.

**2021** AGB celebrates 100 years as an association serving university and college presidents, board chairs, and individual board members of both public and private higher education institutions and institutionally related foundations with the resources they need to enhance their effectiveness.

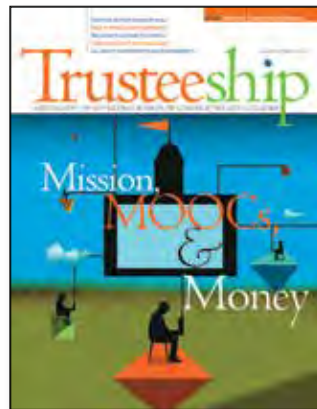
during the Vietnam era increased the exposure of college and university management and the public's interest in it.

It could be considered luck that a few committed individuals managed to hold AGB together until board members and presidents needed or wanted to be part of

such an organization. One could say that AGB's survival and subsequent explosion of activity is attributable to the emergence of controversy and accountability in college and university governance.

It is difficult to say whether an organization like AGB ever would have been

formed had AGB dissolved before the 1960s. Because AGB was an organization of volunteers, not professionals, it is entirely possible that the development of programs and research on lay governance may have ended up dispersed among the sector-based higher education associations.



## DECADE BY DECADE U.S. HIGHER ED STATS

HISTORIC DATA ON AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION OVER FIVE DECADES

Academic Year 1919–1920	
Institutions	1,041
Faculty	48,615
Total Fall Enrollment	597,880
Bachelor's Degrees	48,622
Master's Degrees	4,279
Doctoral Degrees	615

Academic Year 1939–1940	
Institutions	1,708
Faculty	146,929
Total Fall Enrollment	1,494,203
Bachelor's Degrees	186,500
Master's Degrees	26,731
Doctoral Degrees	3,290

Academic Year 1959–1960	
Institutions:	2,004
Faculty	380,554
Total Fall Enrollment	3,639,847
Bachelor's Degrees:	392,440
Master's Degrees	74,435
Doctoral Degrees	9,829

Academic Year 1929–1930	
Institutions	1,049
Faculty	82,386
Total Fall Enrollment	1,100,737
Bachelor's Degrees	122,484
Master's Degrees	14,969
Doctoral Degrees	2,299

Academic Year 1949–1950	
Institutions	1,851
Faculty	246,722
Total Fall Enrollment	2,444,900
Bachelor's Degrees	432,058
Master's Degrees	58,183
Doctoral Degrees	6,420

Academic Year 1969–1970	
Institutions	2,525
Faculty	450,000
Total Fall Enrollment	8,004,660
Bachelor's Degrees	792,316
Master's Degrees	213,589
Doctoral Degrees	59,486



## AGB BY THE NUMBERS 2021

**1921**  
Year of AGB's  
founding

**210**  
Institutionally  
related foundations  
represented  
by AGB

**ATTENDEES**  
at the virtual 2020 National  
Conference on Trusteeship

**731**

**1,900**  
Colleges and  
universities  
represented  
by AGB

**165**

Institutions served by  
AGB Consulting in 2019–2020

**1,256**

Boards represented  
by AGB



**40,000**

Individuals served by AGB

**961**

**ATTENDEES**

at the virtual 2021 Foundation Forum

### Academic Year 1979–1980

Institutions	3,152
Faculty	675,000
Total Fall Enrollment	11,569,899
Bachelor's Degrees	929,417
Master's Degrees	305,196
Doctoral Degrees	95,631

### Academic Year 1999–2000

Institutions	4,084
Faculty	1,027,830
Total Fall Enrollment	14,791,224
Bachelor's Degrees	1,237,875
Master's Degrees	463,185
Doctoral Degrees	118,736

### Academic Year 2020–2021\*

Institutions	--
Faculty	--
Total Fall Enrollment	19,744,000
Bachelor's Degrees	1,998,000
Master's Degrees	833,000
Doctoral Degrees	187,000

### Academic Year 1989–1990

Institutions	3,535
Faculty	824,220
Total Fall Enrollment	13,538,560
Bachelor's Degrees	1,051,344
Master's Degrees	330,152
Doctoral Degrees	103,508

### Academic Year 2009–2010

Institutions	4,495
Faculty	1,439,074
Total Fall Enrollment	20,313,594
Bachelor's Degrees	1,649,919
Master's Degrees	693,313
Doctoral Degrees	158,590

*\*Projected data (not all data available)*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Selected Higher Education Statistics (NCES Digest of Education Statistics Table 301.20, Table 303.10, Table 318.10)

# THE DARTMOUTH DECISION

*Where Trustees Come From and How We Must Lead*

BY ANDREW LOUNDER

**T**HE AMERICAN SYSTEM of college and university governance emerged from colonial roots, reflecting both early experience and the clear imprint of a burgeoning democracy. Colonies, the Crown and later states, chartered boards to engage in a remarkable degree of self-regulation in guiding early institutions of higher learning. Such empowerment made for inevitable conflicts that would eventually reach the courts.

So it was that in the Dartmouth College case of 1819, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed not only the general sanctity of a contract but very specifically the autonomy of an independent college board to govern an institution as a chartered corporate entity. That judgment ensured the independence of both public and private institutions and shaped the course of American higher education governance.<sup>1</sup> The decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Trustees of Dartmouth College v. William H. Woodward* (1819) confirmed that boards of trustees bore the ultimate fiduciary responsibility for institutions of higher education. That legal precedent contributed to the development of what is today more than 4,500 public and private nonprofit colleges

and universities in the United States, governed by some 50,000 trustees. Beyond the courtroom drama, political maneuvering, and campus hijinks, the case and the events that led to the historic Dartmouth decision are worth reflection by contemporary trustees.

## Public Leadership

In his 1817 opinion *New Hampshire Superior Court* Chief Justice William Richardson noted:

The education of the rising generation is a matter of highest public concern and is worthy of the best attention of every legislature. But make the trustees independent and they will ultimately forget that their office is a public trust—will

at length consider these institutions as their own—will overlook the great purposes for which their powers were originally given, and will exercise them only to gratify their own private views and wishes, or to promote the narrow purposes of a sect or a party.

Two centuries later, trustees in the public and private sectors approach the idea of college and university governance largely along different lines. On the public side, trustees' authority and independence is too often contested—much as in the Dartmouth case—by the state's elected officials. If Chief Justice Richardson had lived to observe the partisan rancor in which many of the nation's public institutions have been caught up, he may have been shocked by history's sense of irony. A four-term governor once advised AGB: "Governors should appoint 'the big people' [to university governing boards]," those capable of taking a call from an elected official, hearing that person's ideas, and respectfully reserving judgment. Independent judgment is essential to a board member's legal fiduciary duty, and that kind of public leadership is being tested.

Private colleges and universities are also established, regulated, and taxed (or tax-exempt) in accordance with public purposes, too. Today, as many private boards face weighty decisions about institutional vitality, they must likewise revitalize discussions about the beneficiaries the institution means to serve and the benefits they will convey. Private boards can choose whether and how to respond to needs of states, but effective direction of their institutions goes beyond



Dartmouth Hall,  
Dartmouth College Campus,  
Hanover, New Hampshire

balanced budgets alone and requires they not “forget that their office is a public trust.”

### Courageous Leadership

The Dartmouth College trustees risked their reputations and their fortunes when they challenged the state’s takeover of the college. Historical accounts suggest their efforts were deeply unpopular, not only because of widely distributed propaganda, but because the government they confronted had swept in on a populist platform. Today, much is required for boards to be effective—curiosity, judgment, restraint, diligence, independence—and none of it matters absent the courage to act.

In closing arguments, Daniel Webster famously turned to U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, pleading:

Sir, you may destroy this little institution; it is weak, it is in your hands! I know it is one of the lesser lights in the literary horizon of our country. You may put it out! But if you do so, you must carry through your work! You must extinguish, one after another, all those great lights of science which for more than a century have thrown their radiance over our land!<sup>2</sup>

When Webster spoke these words, no one could not have known that their effect would be to facilitate the proliferation of more than 4,600 public and private nonprofit colleges and universities today—a sector that, despite imperfections, remains an indispensable engine for American prosperity and influence around the world. This is a special legacy of trusteeship in the United States, one of conviction, commitment, and great courage.

1. The beginning of this article to this point is from *Effective Governing Boards: A Guide for Members of Governing Boards of Independent Colleges and Universities*, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 2010.
2. <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~dwebster/speeches/dartmouth-peroration.html>

**Andrew Louder, PhD**, is AGB’s director of programs and a trustee of Wheaton College in Massachusetts.

## How the Trustees of *Dartmouth College v. William H. Woodward* Decision Shaped the Heritage of American Governing Boards

Two hundred years ago, a Supreme Court decision established the legal precedent for governing boards of colleges and universities. Trusteeship magazine is honoring the 200-year anniversary with a timeline of events leading up to this monumental case that established that governing boards would bear the ultimate fiduciary responsibility for institutions of higher education.

**Timeline of events (adapted largely from the “Will to Resist: The Dartmouth College Case” by Richard W. Morin, 1969, *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*):**

**1769** Dartmouth College is chartered under the authority of King George III, with oversight by a board of 12 trustees, including the college president.

**1779** Upon his death, founding president Eleazar Wheelock bequeaths the presidency of Dartmouth College to son John Wheelock.

**1804–1811** Tension mounts between President Wheelock and local church members. A new generation of Dartmouth trustees becomes increasingly frustrated by the situation.

**1811** The Board of Trustees takes several split votes (7-3) formally opposing key actions, policies, and positions taken by President Wheelock, noting they had “long labored to restore the harmony which formerly prevailed” at the college, and expressing “apprehension that if the present state of things is suffered to remain...the College will be essentially injured.”

**1814** The Board of Trustees votes and resolves that President Wheelock will not participate in the final oral examinations of the senior class. Incensed, President Wheelock proposes a board resolution that would invite an investigation “into the situation and circumstances” of the college by the state legislature. The resolution predictably fails.

**1815 May:** President Wheelock anonymously publishes an 88-page treatise alleging sweeping malfeasance by the Dartmouth College board: “Sketches of the History of Dartmouth College and Moor’s Charity School with a Particular Account of Some Late Remarkable Proceedings from the Year 1779 to the Year 1815.” He coordinates with a prospective faculty member, whose hire was rejected by the board in 1811, to anonymously publish a confirmatory account. Key among the published allegations: the board holds itself “unamenable to a higher power,” making itself “an independent government in an independent state.”

**1815 May:** President Wheelock quickly writes to the state legislature to confirm the allegations published anonymously and invite an investigation of Dartmouth College governance. Key among his assertions is that the board is pursuing a partisan educational program (note: most board members—including Wheelock himself—are Federalists, whereas the state’s legislature and governor’s office are controlled by the Republican party).

**1815 June:** The state legislature forms a committee “to investigate the concerns of Dartmouth College... and the acts and proceedings of the Trustees [...]”

**1815 August:** President Wheelock requests the representation of prominent New Hampshire lawyer and college alumnus Daniel Webster on his behalf during the proceedings of the investigative committee. Webster fails to respond, and when an ally of President Wheelock writes to chastise him, he responds: “I am not quite so fully convinced as you are that the president is altogether right and the trustees altogether wrong.”

**1815 August:** Following the conclusion of the legislature’s investigative committee hearing on campus, the board of trustees accepts the report of its own investigative subcommittee that President Wheelock is behind the anonymous publications, and it calls him to account. Wheelock asserts the board has no jurisdiction during the legislative investigation and refuses to meet with the board. The board votes 8-2 to remove President Wheelock from office.

**1815 September:** The Dartmouth College Board of Trustees meets to inaugurate Francis Brown as the third president of Dartmouth College. The only trustees in attendance are those who voted to remove President Wheelock.

**1816 June:** Legislation is signed into law to amend the original royal charter of Dartmouth College to: increase the number of college trustees from 12 to 21; create a 25-member board of overseers, made up of state officials, with veto authority over the board of trustees; and change the name of the institution to Dartmouth University.

**1816 August:** The board of Dartmouth College (all except one member—President Wheelock’s nephew and board treasurer, William Woodward) meets on campus, simultaneous to the inaugural meeting of the Dartmouth University Trustees nearby. Without the Dartmouth College board members the Dartmouth University board, chaired by Governor William Plumer himself, fails to assemble a quorum. The Dartmouth College board further resolves and conveys to those assembled on behalf of Dartmouth University: “We the Trustees of Dartmouth College do not accept the provisions of an act of Legislature of New Hampshire... but do hereby expressly refuse to act under the same.”

**1816 November:** New legislation passes effectively reducing the size of a quorum to nine members of the Dartmouth University board.

**1816 December:** New legislation passes effectively making each Dartmouth College trustee and faculty member liable for a \$500 fine for each and every action taken on behalf of the institution (such as a vote of the board, or the teaching of a class).

**1817 January:** Hamilton College attempts to hire away President Brown at twice his Dartmouth College salary. He declines.

**1817 February:** The Dartmouth College board files suit against former board treasurer William Woodward (former president Wheelock’s nephew) for the return of the college’s charter, seal, account books, and other materials. The case proceeds immediately to the New Hampshire Superior Court, bypassing the lower Court of Common Pleas, where Woodward is a sitting judge.

**1817 February:** The Dartmouth University board holds its first meeting, away from campus, in the state capital. The board votes to remove from their positions: President Brown, all trustees siding with Dartmouth College, and two noncompliant faculty members. The presidency of Dartmouth University is conferred upon former president Wheelock’s son-in-law, William Allen. The board further empowers three of its members as university “superintendents” and charges them to “take possession” of university buildings.

**1817 April:** Former president Wheelock dies, bequeathing to Dartmouth University a gift of land of suitable value to support the salaries of a president and multiple new faculty.

**1817 August:** Dartmouth College and Dartmouth University hold commencement exercises on the same day, in accordance with the college’s original bylaws. A group of roughly 60 individuals armed with clubs and rocks (college students and others) occupy the building in which commencement ceremonies are typically held. The Dartmouth University exercises are relocated to another building.

**1817 September:** The first substantive Superior Court hearing in Dartmouth v. Woodward takes place, featuring eminent national figures as legal counsel on both sides. All three justices hearing the case had been appointed in 1816 by Governor William Plumer, a leading advocate of Dartmouth University. Dartmouth College asserts three central points:

- The college is chartered as a private corporation legally independent from control by the state legislature;
- The state legislature failed to follow due process in the seizure of private property; and



- Since the college charter is a contract, the legislature's actions violate the U.S. Constitution, which expressly precludes states from passing laws that interfere with contractual obligations.

The defense contends:

- Dartmouth College was chartered as a public corporation and is therefore subject to legislative control (citing the charter itself that the college was established: "...that the best means of education be established in our province of New Hampshire for the benefit of said province.");
- Even if the college was a private corporation the legislature's authority of eminent domain would apply; and
- The college's original charter, from the British monarch, is not protected by the U.S. Constitution.

**1817 November:** The New Hampshire Superior Court finds for the defense, affirming Dartmouth College was a public corporation subject to direct legislative control. Chief Justice Richardson expounds: "The education of the rising generation is a matter of highest public concern and is worthy of the best attention of every legislature. [...] But make the trustees independent and they will ultimately forget that their office is a public trust—will at length consider these institutions as their own—will overlook the great purposes for which their powers were originally given, and will exercise them only to gratify their own private views and wishes, or to promote the narrow purposes of a sect or a party."

**1817 November:** Fearful that Dartmouth College agents were absconding with books, three Dartmouth University faculty members lead a group of about 20 university supporters to force their way into the library with an axe. Perhaps hoping to remove important books to a more secure location, the group is met upon its exit by about 150 students and friends of Dartmouth College, according to one student's report. University agents are allowed to leave unharmed but without any books.

**1817 November:** Alumnus Daniel Webster agrees to petition the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of the Dartmouth College Board of Trustees.

**1818 March:** The U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments in *Trustees of Dartmouth College v. William H. Woodward*. At dispute, now, is the singular issue as to whether the college charter comprises a contract under the U.S. Constitution, and whose obligations were abrogated by the New Hampshire legislature. Daniel Webster's impassioned arguments include a concern that would, in years to come, similarly shape an American tradition of autonomous board responsibility for public universities:

"[This case] affects not this college only, but every college, and all the literary institutions of the country. They have flourished, hitherto, and have become in a high degree respectable and useful to the community. They have all a common principle of existence, the inviolability of their charters. It will be a dangerous, a most dangerous experiment, to hold these institutions subject to the rise and fall of popular parties and the fluctuations of political opinions."

**1818 August:** Having received reports not only that the college's counsel was masterful but that their own arguments were poorly delivered, the Dartmouth University board changes counsel, hiring former U.S. Attorney General William Pinkney. A strategy is hatched to reopen arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court at the start of the next term.

**1818 August:** Dartmouth College, graduating 26 seniors, holds commencement exercises one week early. Dartmouth University graduates six. Confrontation is avoided.

**1819 February:** Early on the second day of the new term, precluding the question of fresh arguments, U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall delivers a 5-1 majority opinion in favor of the plaintiff, affirming: 1) Dartmouth College is a private corporation, 2) the Dartmouth College charter is effectively a contract protected by the U.S. Constitution, and 3) the Dartmouth University legislation "is subversive of the contract on the faith of which the donors' property was given." The Chief Justice adds:

"It is probable that no man ever will be the founder of a college, believing at the time that an act of incorporation constitutes no security for the institution; believing that it is immediately to be deemed a public institution, whose funds are to be governed and applied, not by the will of the donor, but by the will of the legislature."

**1819 February:** It takes six days for news of the victory to reach Dartmouth College. Students celebrate by ringing bells, firing cannons, and lighting bonfires.

**1819 March:** Dartmouth University suspends operation. Most students transfer their enrollment to Dartmouth College. **17**

# AGB's 60TH BIRTHDAY

## *"An Unlikely Story" (Part I)*

BY J.L. ZWINGLE, 1981

It is an unlikely story. AGB in 1981 quietly acknowledging its 60th anniversary. Can it be true? AGB is still a newcomer among the recognized educational organizations. True, its membership today includes 975 boards, representing almost 1,500 institutions, and has a mailing list of 24,000 trustees/regents/visitors/curators, and those of still other nomenclature. Its total annual budget now exceeds one million dollars.

But consider: ten years ago its membership amounted to 350 boards and 8,000 individuals. Ten years before that, in 1961, the membership totaled 82 boards and 1,800 individuals, and the budget amounted to \$38,932.

### **It's Been a Three-act Play**

There are three major episodes in the history of AGB. The first forty years make up one story; the fifth decade another kind of story; and the sixth decade still another. The big chance was first of all a change in concept, beginning around 1960 and culminating in the opening of the Washington headquarters in 1964. The question in 1964 was whether the concept would win acceptance. It was still a question in 1966, even in 1968. The answer to the question came in two parts: membership and money. But first, back to the beginning.

Information about the genesis of AGB is limited to the first published *Proceedings* of the Association. This slender document, dated 1923, carries a tantalizing brief account of a preliminary meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1920 that led to a formal organizational conference in Chicago in 1921. The Ann Arbor gathering was an informal group of regents and presidents, held as part of an "Educational Conference" celebrating the inauguration of President Burton. There were 19 regents

(eight from the University of Michigan), 10 university presidents, and a representative of the Bureau of Education in Washington. (This gentleman, George F. Zook, became the founding president of the American Council on Education.) President Sommers of the University of Minnesota and Regent Hammond of the University of Wisconsin read papers on, respectively, "The Salary Problem" and "Student Fees and Tuition Charges," both of which were published as part of the record of the inauguration.

But discussion also arose about the need for exchange of information among trustees and regents of state universities. A committee was appointed, which met and reported favorably; and a permanent chairman was elected in the person of Regent Junius Beal of the University of Michigan.

### **AGB is Born**

Under the committees' leadership a constitution for a permanent organization was drawn up, establishing purpose and defining membership and establishing a structure of president, two vice presidents, a secretary and a treasurer. The president, vice president and treasurer were joined by three members to be elected at large to form the executive committee. A meeting



J.L. Zwingle

of the committee was held at the University Club of Chicago on November 3, 1921, the constitution discussed and adopted, and the "Association of Governing Boards of State Universities and Allied Institutions" was born.

The new association held its first general session two years later, in connection with the annual meeting of the Association of State Universities at the

Auditorium Hotel in Chicago, November 12-13, 1923. The constitution was ratified and a slate of officers was elected, listed as follows in the "Proceedings":

President, J.W. Fesler, Trustee, Indiana University; Vice Presidents, A. Wagner, Regent of Education, South Dakota; Bee King, Trustee, University of Colleges of Mississippi; Secretary and Treasurer, D.W. Springer, Auditor, University of Michigan; Executive Committee, F.A. Holliday, Trustee, University of Wyoming; J.W. Barnes, Board of Control, West Virginia University; Anna B. Lawther, Iowa State Board of Education.

The first program of the Association consisted of four papers, each dealing with some part of the general topic, "What the University Can Do for the State." Interestingly, along with agriculture and commerce, one of the topics concerned the question of religion. Very likely this early inclusion had something to do with the lingering accusation that the state universities were "godless" institutions, an attitude fostered largely by the supporters of church-related institutions which (quite rightly) were feeling threatened



by the stirrings of growth among the state universities.

Rivalry was not confined to public vs. private (and church-related). There was also a period of intense competition between the older state universities and the land-grant colleges and universities in those states where the two were separate. That story is not at the center of AGB's development, but it has a bearing. The "allied institutions" part of the association—the regional institutions—became perhaps more important in the long run than the original state universities, because there were more of them.

### When Dues Were \$25

There is no need to recount in detail the early history of the association. In 1931, when the annual meeting was held at the end of the year at the University of Minnesota, there were 36 member boards. Dues ranged from \$25 to \$60 a year, according to enrollment.

Expenditures for that fiscal year totaled \$1,200.

*Proceedings* of the meetings included verbatim reports of individual comments and all of the personal exchanges about both the program topics and the business meeting. By 1931 there had developed a certain pattern of operation which prevailed for many years.

The principal activities consisted of the annual meeting and the publication of *Proceedings*. The annual meeting was held on campus at the invitation of some member board. With the help of a program committee, the host institution took almost total responsibility for formulating the program and inviting speakers. The schedule usually included a campus tour and perhaps a

demonstration of some new or outstanding program or facility, and a football game.

### A Midwest Core

Certain names appear in the roster of those attending. Among these early regulars was Judge Ora Wildermuth of Gary, Indiana, a trustee of Indiana University. After serving as president for a year he became a long-term member of the executive committee, occupying various offices, and was one of several persons who provided continuity. Institutions in the upper Middle Western states were the core of the organization: Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota.

Of course the decade of the '30s was no easy time for any organization, certainly not for this small voluntary group. On the other

hand, there was very little overhead. The dues were kept at the minimum, a token amount, really. Eventually, host institutions appropriated funds to help defray the cost of the annual meeting. (It was probably seen as an investment in public relations.) The host institution provided promotional services, frequently of the university. A special letter of invitation was mailed with follow-up mailings of institutional or regional information.

And so things moved along through the decade.

### To the Conference by Steamship?

The 20th annual meeting was scheduled for the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, October 29-31, 1942. Among the regular

### Following is a list of locations for annual meetings from the beginning through October 1941.

<b>November 12-13, 1923</b>	Chicago
<b>November 10-11, 1924</b>	Chicago
<b>November 19-21, 1925</b>	Ohio State University, Columbus
<b>November 11-13, 1926</b>	University of Wisconsin, Madison
<b>November 3-5, 1927</b>	University of Missouri, Columbia
<b>November 15-17, 1928</b>	Iowa State College, Ames
<b>November 7-8, 1929</b>	Purdue University, Lafayette, Ind.
<b>November 13-15, 1930</b>	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
<b>October 29-31, 1931</b>	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
<b>November 16-19, 1932</b>	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
<b>November 22-25, 1933</b>	Indiana University, Bloomington
<b>November 15-17, 1934</b>	Ohio State University, Columbus
<b>November 7-9, 1935</b>	University of Nebraska, Lincoln
<b>November 12-14, 1936</b>	University of Kentucky, Lexington
<b>October 13-15, 1937</b>	Massachusetts State College, Amherst
<b>October 12-15, 1938</b>	University of Colorado, Boulder
<b>October 25-28, 1939</b>	University of Texas, Austin
<b>November 7-9, 1940</b>	Indiana University, Bloomington



attendees was Dr. Jose M. Gallardo, Commissioner of Education and trustee of the University of Puerto Rico. In retrospect, it is interesting to read about Dr. Gallardo's urgent invitation to the members of AGB to hold a meeting in San Juan. The (*verbatim*) minutes record the exchange with the chairman, indicating that San Juan was easily available by steamship from New York, making it possible to complete the round trip within a week, allowing time for the meeting. It was also recorded that air service from Miami had been established, requiring only a few hours for the flight. The invitation was regrettably declined.

What with the Depression and the oncoming world conflict, these were indeed troubled times. From the *Proceedings* during these years, however, one gets only a passing glimpse of the great economic pressures felt throughout the world. It is not that the regents were unaware or unconcerned. It was rather the continued focus on immediate problems of the institutions, as might be further understood from another reference in the *Proceedings* of 1939. Apparently it was already being advanced in some quarters that AGB should shift from its almost totally volunteer status, and align itself more

formally and professionally with other educational organizations.

The correspondence reflecting the details is not available. But the following excerpt reveals a great deal. The chairman was giving his annual report at the end of his year of office:

I have been unable to reach the objectives I set up for myself at year ago. I had hoped for, for one thing, that we might make a substantial increase in our membership during my administration. I have two fairly good excuses for my failure to accomplish much to which I can point with pride as I retire from the office of President. The first is, it is difficult for a business man, with a considerable number of other irons in the fire, to find time for everything he undertakes to do. The other is that it is difficult to do effective work entirely by correspondence with one's fellow officers and with members of the directory board located in widely separated areas of the United States.

Probably the most important question of policy that has risen during the past year is the one outlined in Secretary Springer's call of this meeting. I have reference to the suggestion that a committee be appointed to study the advisability of this association becoming affiliated with eight other educational groups in establishing a secretariat in Chicago and thus reap a benefit from a closer relationship with those other groups. I believe one of the most important advantages claimed for the relationship was a more favorable position with the Federal Government through the National Conference on Education. I do not now know nor has it ever been disclosed to me who or what are the other eight groups. I wrote Mr. Springer: that the idea of joining in holy wedlock with a bride whose name I did not know had no appeal to me, and that I could see no advantage to our Association in a close tie-up with the Federal Government.



Therecord does not show, nor is correspondence now available, to reveal the kind of proposal mentioned by the speaker. Subsequent events make clear, however, that the mood of these 1939 remarks reflected the prevailing sentiment of the members. Two decades later the same mood prevailed among many of the regulars:

As a matter of fact, the thing I have liked most about this Association is that we have no lofty ideal or objectives except to benefit by our contacts with each other and fit ourselves to give better service to the respective states we serve. The Boards we represent are not bound by any action of this Association...

Another subject (and, in my judgment, a far more important subject) mentioned in Mr. Springer's call, was the one having to do with "Federal Aid" so capably discussed in the address of President Mills at our 1938 meeting in his state of Colorado. Mr. Springer has asked boards of control holding membership in this association to give thoughtful consideration to the subject of Mr. Mills' address and instruct their representatives to this meeting if any definite action is desired. (So early the misgivings, so current the distress!) I



have asked Mr. Springer to list on our printed program several subjects suggested by those in attendance at our 1938 meeting. I hope that you will be giving them some advance thought and, as we find time during the next two days for informal discussion of such subjects of general interest, that you will be prompt with any remarks you may wish to make. As I have already pointed out, in my judgment we derive the greatest benefits from our Association membership by attendance at these annual meetings in the free exchange of ideas and experience.

In 1941, less than two months before Pearl Harbor: at the University of Wyoming, 32 member boards are represented. During the ensuing decade it is a small wonder that the Association survived. Those who can recall the turbulence of those times, the all but complete overturning of every enterprise, can but think the fate of AGB was of little concern to anyone. Yet the meetings were held, and the discussions continued. During this period the name of Dr. M. M. Chambers emerges. This worthy gentleman began then and continues to this day to provide statistics showing how the states finance the colleges

and universities for which they carry major responsibility. He attended the AGB meetings faithfully, reporting regularly. He moved from position to position, from Washington to Michigan to Indiana; and from him came a steady stream of financial data.

### Good Old Placid 1951

Taking 1951 as the next marker, 30 years after the committee meeting of 1921, one finds on the program of that Annual Meeting an address by the acting president of Columbia University, Grayson Kirk. Topic? "Education for Citizenship." Hardly more than another decade to go before the great eruptions.

The size of the published *Proceedings* increased from year to year, as in fact did the substance of the programs. In 1952, Arthur H. Adams, president of the American Council on Education, addressed the group on "Proper Relationship Between Governing Boards and Administrative Officers of Colleges and Universities." This gentleman maintained a serious concern for AGB through the years, and upon retirement from ACE became a consultant to the Executive Committee of AGB, in which role he helped bring about a major step forward, the establishment of the AGB national office in Washington 12 years after his appearance on the 1952 program.

Another topic of 1952 has a familiar ring: "Academic Tenure," discussion of which was led by the long-time president of AAUP, Dr. Ralph Himstead. Another and novel topic that year was "Educational Television."

### Making the New York Scene

The 1954 conference was held in New York City, the State University of New York as host. The lead-off topic: "Government Control of State Supported Institutions." Appearing on the program were a number of familiar figures: Henry Heald, then presi-



dent of New York University, Fred Hechinger of the *New York Times*, President Lloyd Morey, of the University of Illinois, many others.

Membership still languished, and the budget amounted to only \$4,000, half of which was absorbed by the annual meeting. But the Association persisted, and new efforts were made to attract members. Various national figures in higher education appeared on programs of the Annual Meetings as they moved from campus to campus. Attendance at meetings was mainly regional, though certain members from a distance made it a point to attend.

It was during this period that Richard Plock became secretary-treasurer, and in effect directed AGB affairs for a small stipend while continuing the practice of law in Burlington, Iowa, and serving on the Iowa State Board of Regents.

During this period, a Board of Honorary Advisors was established, consisting of past presidents and other appropriate persons. Another group came into being, called Regional Directors. By 1958 there were 21 on the roll, each responsible informally for stimulating interest in AGB among other institutions in their assigned territories.



In and among these groups of interested persons, membership increased to 76 member boards by 1959, the year of Richard Plock's death. The ensuing several years were marked by much uncertainty about the future of the organization. At the same time, there was considerable expenditure of energy by the persons then at the center.

### A Move to Denver

Mrs. Virginia Blue, a Regent of the University of Colorado and immediate past president of AGB, succeeded Richard Plock as part-time executive and located AGB headquarters in Denver. The title Executive Director was established for her. (Judge Wildermuth had served as secretary from 1942 to 1949; and Richard Plock from 1949 to 1959.)

During the next half-decade, AGB leaders were confronted by a set of problems that were resolved, with considerable strain. For some time a conviction had been growing about the need for an organization of trustees to include the private sector as well as the public. Such a change involved a decision whether to start afresh or to reshape the existing organization. The question of finance posed a further problem. Finally, the constitution of AGB was revised and approaches were made to the Carnegie Corporation of New York. There was a cautious, tentative response. The Corporation shared some of the general doubt whether it would be possible to move from the existing organization into a new arrangement.

### The \$75,000 Understanding

A rather quiet understanding was reached that if someone could be identified who could be mutually acceptable to AGB and to the Corporation to assume responsibility for the new venture, there might be start-up funds available to try the experiment. One way or another agreement was reached, and a three-year grant of \$75,000 was authorized.

The new executive (J.L. Zwingle) was more advanced in years than some had expected. Was he energetic enough to win new support? The Washington office was opened in June of 1964, and another significant episode was begun.

The leadership still represented the old order, thus: the annual fall meeting (plus a spring meeting which had been developed) was the focus. Those attending the meeting were known as "delegates," and a quasi-legislative tone prevailed. A new element had recently been added, called the "School for Regents." It in effect became the program of the annual meetings, with a business session added. The program for the "school" was responsible for establishing the theme and procuring the speakers.

In the meantime, the solicitation of new members continued to rely on "applications" from prospective members. After the change in the constitution, privately endowed institutions were invited to submit applications for membership—including the entire roster of the Ivy League. The invitation was greeted with official silence by most non-members, not alone the Ivy League.

### Problems, Problems

The new executive discovered that he was faced with multiple problems: the procedures governing the predecessor organization were in effect but were contrary to the expectations of institutions in the private sector. The assumed independence of the trustee organization was seen as a potential threat to some presidents. The absence of a declared and accepted program left a void into which the presidents (and trustees) in the private sector were reluctant to venture. Therefore, it was clearly necessary to allay suspicions on both sides, and to develop a program acceptable all around. At the same time, the established and presidentially con-

trolled organization already functioning in Washington shared the doubts and misgivings of everyone else.

In retrospect, the ensuing period could be called "death watch." Again in retrospect, a certain ghoulish humor can be seen in the course of events.

The first annual meeting under the new administration almost did not occur. The president of the host institution was President William Friday of the University of North Carolina, whose trustee Roy Rowe was president of AGB. The chairman of the "School for Regents" was Wales Madden of the University of Texas.

A major goal of the new executive was to establish strong relationships with other associations in higher education. Somewhat over-eagerly, he pressed invitations upon the officers of those associations to visit the first AGB meeting after the opening of the Washington office. Too soon. Those who did not attend found little to indicate directions to be set for AGB, and result was not good. In the same line, efforts were made to formulate joint programs with the other educational groups. Too soon. Again, direct approaches were made to institutional presidents forming the volunteer leadership of the older groups. But it is hard to establish common cause with another group when prospective benefits are not clear to the other party. And so, presentation was made to no avail: silence.

In private, some presidents were outspoken: (1) "You are building an employers' union.

Don't need that. (2) "If any trustee has time to spare, I want it." (3) "So you want me to tell my trustees what to do! I prefer to have them get the word from me."

Yet, there were some presidents who put in a good word, who even helped solicit funds, and who responded when asked. They ultimately made the difference. ■

# AGB...

## *An Unlikely Story (Part II)*

BY J.L. ZWINGLE, 1981

It was clear in the mid-1960s that AGB could succeed only if presidents found some special asset in such an organization. What could AGB offer that was not available elsewhere? One possibility lay in a series of publications sent directly to trustees and regents. The *Proceedings* of the annual meeting did contain many very good addresses on important topics. But the format did not invite readership. Absent funds for an ambitious program of publications, a cautious beginning was made by the expedient of publishing separately in pocket format certain addresses made at the annual meeting, and dropping from the record all but the essential facts concerning the business of the Association.

Implicit in this decision was the assumption that very few people were interested in AGB as an organization, and that the future lay not so much in emphasizing AGB itself as in offering services and opportunities that would eventually appeal to presidents and trustees alike.

### **A Serious Purpose?**

Also implicit in this departure was another assumption: That seriousness of purpose must be demonstrated if the organization were ever to gain a significant constituency. Personal relationships and a “reunion” atmosphere had marked AGB gatherings heretofore. Minutes of the Executive Committee in 1961 indicate that perhaps the social aspects of the meetings had been overdone. Yet the new executive was confidentially assured that success lay in only one direction, to make the attendees have a jolly good time. The decision was to put this idea directly to the test. If the organization could not survive the weight of serious intent, so it was thought, perhaps it should shrink.

Another assumption guiding these transition years was that foundations,

both philanthropic and corporate, would need to pour funds into the organization to provide for enlarged programs and publications. Outstanding among experiences of this period were such responses as these: (1) from a philanthropic foundation officer: “Trustees?” Best thing to do is drown them.” (2) From a corporate presi-

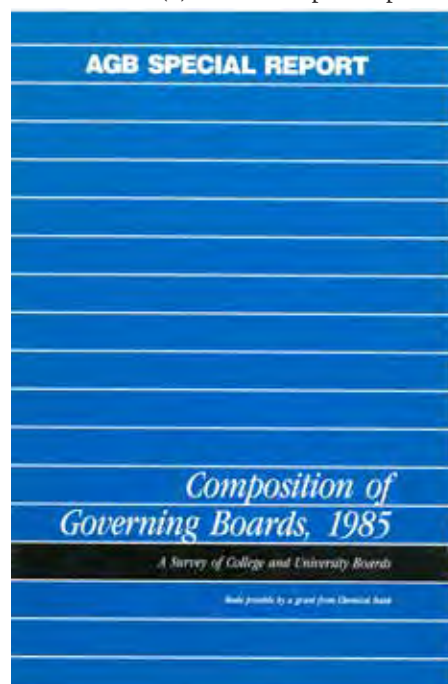
dent: “If the trustees of my institution are a fair sample, there is no possible future.”

### **A Rude Reception**

Membership expansion was obviously among the prime necessities. Memorable in this line of effort was the year when 12 new members were added and 11 dropped out. An old bugaboo kept rearing its head: Regents of the public institutions have special concerns and their own style. That was brought home forcibly when a friendly president on the public side spoke on behalf of AGB at a meeting of the Association of American Universities. He was blown out of the water. Word from the private sector: “Our trustees have little in common with those in the public sector.”

Much later, the chief gunner, himself then in another position, told me about it and gave his reasons. It was then suggested that perhaps the AGB office should be locked and the key thrown away. No, no, quoth he. Not now. Things are obviously different and better. (But those who know can testify that his former board was a long time a-joining.)

In retrospect, about all that can be said for the administration of AGB during this period is that it persisted. The members of the Executive Committee (in effect the Board of Directors) disguised their misgivings and lent encouragement as they could. Meanwhile, membership grew by small increments from the 90 inherited from the previous organization to 200, then 300 and on toward the mark



of 500—the ultimate as then perceived. Exxon led the way with supporting funds; then U.S. Steel; then Kellogg; and Mellon; and Lilly.

The publications grew in usefulness and popularity. From the first small pamphlets to a 32-pager, nine times a year, sprinkled with reprints of important articles with various sources. While some people felt that AGB was tending to be a bit “academic,” others were outspoken in praise. The argument could be made, and was made, that for the same amount of money as AGB dues, no institution could assemble for itself and put before its board such useful, broad-gauged, timely, thoughtful material. Of course there were some rather significant use of these materials among non-members, but that was good advertising.

During this period, the composition the board was undergoing considerable change and the memory of olden days was not so strong. There was a significant shift away from the notion of “delegates” from member boards, symbolized by the new designation of AGB gatherings as “Conferences” and “Workshops.”

## A Danger Averted

An obvious flaw in the “delegate” notion is the implied authority of a so-called delegate to vote on matters of educational policy as if speaking for the board of the home institution, demonstrably not the true position. As in other organizations, there was temptation to adopt resolutions, calling for action either by AGB or some other body. Such resolutions usually carry about as much weight as the paper on which the sentiment is recorded. Yet politically inclined members were on alert to propose some resolution that would make good copy in the home press.

Several such instances developed during the ‘60s. One time, a delegation from an industrial city proposed a reso-

lution to require AGB to undertake programs completely out of reach, activities that would have involved controversy with every institution. The local press had been informed that such proposals were in the offing and should have coverage by the wire services. Fortunately, the proposals did not reach the floor and similar efforts were diverted in subsequent meetings.

It was difficult to explain to those who did not wish to understand that the AGB Board of Directors was not empowered to speak for every member institution. In one instance, ACE and AGB were invited to participate in developing a statement on faculty role in institutional governance. AGB and ACE both “commended the statement” for consideration by local boards, but carefully avoided endorsement outright. Small difference. Faculty members wrote from time to time, informing AGB that this board or that was in violation of “AGB regulations,” and should be brought around forthwith.

In retrospect, certain turning points can be seen, and were evident at the time. To repeat, in 1966, two years after the new start, there seemed small prospect of success. The executive orally presented an analysis that indicated a choice between voluntary dissolution or ultimate bankruptcy, (although meager funds of the organization had been carefully managed and yearly reserves increased, so that involuntary bankruptcy was no the immediate problem).

## 1966: A Pivotal Year

But 1966 proved to be a swing year. Campus unrest was at high pitch, trustees were under attack, and AGB was being perceived as perhaps a long-term asset. Attendance at meetings increased, seriousness of purpose was felt, and membership gradually grew. Through this time, two groups proved to

be stalwart in support. One was the volunteer leadership of AGB, persons with nothing to gain except more work and trouble. Another was a set of presidents who as individuals made it their business to lend aid and encouragement even to assistance in raising funds and encouraging new memberships.

It would be unwise to try to name this handy band, but many of these persons hold places of honor in a purely private Hall of Fame.

As to turning points, one isolated event stands out: the day when the mail brought word from Princeton University that its board was considering membership. A branch of Ivy, right out of the blue!

## An Imaginative Recruiting Device

Credit is due to a member of the board, Charles Gelatt, for an effective way of recruiting members. First for his own home state, then for several neighboring states, he underwrote membership fees for independent colleges through a period of two years, with partial underwriting for an additional year. Using this experience as a guide, the Houston Foundation offered the same arrangement to the independent colleges in Texas. In both cases a substantial number of institutions stayed on.

Another aid to membership growth was the publication for a small treatise on trusteeship written by Algo Henderson, former director of the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Michigan, underwritten by the Sears-Robuck Foundation and given wide distribution.

Some early attempts at formal research in trusteeship led to a few small projects of limited usefulness but of symbolic importance. The first of these was a name-count of trustees currently serving institutions nationwide. Procurement of these lists was



naturally difficult at the outset, and they were soon out of date. Yet it was possible to develop some profiles and distribution patterns, and some perception of the rate of trustee turnover (about 15 percent annually).

Other projects were undertaken from time to time but in the absence of a firm base of finance and staff, the hoped-for researches remained as hopes and ideas for a long time.

The time for a change in leadership was at hand. Critical to this change was the development of a long-range plan for the organization, one that was serious, searching, thorough, and publicly announced.

Such an exercise required funds and a director-analyst-author who clearly was disengaged and objective. A planning committee was formed under the chairmanship of Edwin Hewitt, a trustee of Grinnell College, with members of the board of directors and certain persons from the membership.

Once more, the Carnegie Corporation of New York took an interest. After careful scrutiny of the current status of the organization and its long-term potential, the Carnegie Corporation underwrote a preliminary effort to develop a detailed plan of review and projection that could then be considered as a basis for financing the larger analysis.

Central to the plan was the question of whether the analysis would focus on AGB as the vehicle for enlarged service to trustees, or whether the emphasis should rest on the issue of lay trusteeship was fading away, the future of AGB itself was dubious at best. On the other hand, if lay trusteeship were thought to have a future as well as a past, the question still remained whether AGB was the appropriate agency; and if so, whether substantial changes in the program should be defined and projected.



Tom Ingram

### **The Future of Trusteeship and AGB**

As might be supposed, there was no lack of opinion among the members of the committee. One dilemma lay in the question whether AGB should be an organization *of* trustees (if so, for what purpose?) or an organization *for* trustees.

The committee procured the services of John W. Nason, distinguished former president of Swarthmore College, later president of Carleton College, a Rhodes Scholar and an acknowledged leader of higher education. His report, *The Future of Trusteeship*, was enthusiastically received, and served as both stimulus and guide for the immediate future of AGB.

The work of the Commission on the Future documented and publicized the development of the Association as a maturing organization, no longer on probation in educational circles. Financing was more secure. Even though the annual budget was small, reserve funds were adequate for stable planning, rather than having to leap for one ice floe to the next. Attendance at AGB conferences had grown until at last (surprise and delight)

the ballroom of the St. Francis in San Francisco was filled.

Meanwhile, the structure of the organization had been changed for the better. In place of the former executive committee of the association was a board of directors. The chief administrator bore the title of president rather than executive vice-president. Membership reaching toward 500, a goal which once seemed more of a fantasy than a possibility. More substantial grants were coming through, and corporate support was growing. But the president was already beyond normal retirement age. It was time for new leadership.

### **Find the Right Person**

A search committee was appointed. But what sort of person should be sought? A college administrator? A foundation executive? Someone with experience in other association work? It was a crucial matter since AGB was different from most other education organizations in mission and program. The person selected proved to be just right. Robert L. Gale was experienced, but not too old, and with abundant energy, a former vice-president of Carleton College in Minnesota, a former Peace Corps official, and most recently, head of a consulting firm in college and university development.

Just at the point of changeover, it became known that the Lilly Endowment was prepared to consider a significant financial commitment to the field of trusteeship. Nothing could have been more opportune. The new president was brought immediately into consultation and was able to convince the Endowment that AGB was indeed prepared to spread sail and take to the open seas. By equal good-fortune, Richard T. Ingram, the present executive vice president, was persuaded to continue in his staff position, providing important and valuable continuity.

Almost immediately the program of the Association burgeoned, and since 1974 has moved steadily ahead.

A summary account of the highlights of this third major stage in AGB's development may be extracted from the annual report of the president. The total Lilly support amounted to more than one million dollars over four years, the funds being allocated to several different projects, which had been awaiting just such finance. One wonders whether such a grant five years earlier would not have hastened the growth and effectiveness of the Association. That thought did occur to those who were struggling to bring AGB forward.

On the other hand, it can be argued that if not nine years of shape-up, at least substantial time was required to determine the ultimate viability of the idea itself. But let us turn to the steps that were made possible by the large and timely grant, and by others that came along in the seven-year period, 1974-81. At the end of that review, let us also consider afresh some of the basic issues still confronting the governing boards across the nation, and thus confronting AGB as well.

### **1974 Trustee Information Center, Trustee Leadership Program**

The centerpiece of the Lilly-funded effort was a three-year project that resulted in creation of AGB's Board-Mentor Service, to which all AGB member boards have access at low cost for guidance in carrying out self-study and board improvement workshops. Since the Board-Mentor Service became available in 1977, more than 150 boards have taken advantage of the opportunity and have again and again expressed satisfaction and enthusiasm with the results.

Also in 1974, with the aid of a smaller grant from Lilly, the Trustee Information

Clearinghouse and Library, now known as the Trustee Information Center, was inaugurated, the largest informational resource anywhere available to trustees.

A Board Self-Evaluation Project, funded by the Ford Foundation, in due course produced "Board Self-Study and Criteria" for use by boards of private and public four-year and two-year institutions. (A subsequent grant from the Ford Foundation enabled AGB to develop similar materials for multicampus and state coordinating agencies.)

The Association was incorporated and bylaws written and approved by the board of directors.

AGB's two regular publications, *AGB Reports* and *AGB Notes*, were redesigned into new formats with the Association's new logo, and were given a change in periodicity and size. *News Notes* became a 12-months-a-year newsletter while *Reports*, in a conspicuous 11-by-6-inch format, adopted a bimonthly schedule of 48 to 64 pages. An editorial by the president, "Washington Paper Storm," was credited by the IRS with helping to bring about a change in IRS regulations reducing paperwork demanded of institutions.

The corporate resources program was inaugurated, destined to grow to a level of well over \$100,000 a year in unrestricted funding.

### **1976 Financial Information Project; an AGB Film**

In collaboration with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), and supported by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, AGB launched a project to meet trustee needs in the area of financial information. Its outcome was publication of *Financial Responsibilities of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities*, which has found wide use among boards, presidents and

business officers.

A film titled "College and University Trusteeship" and a series of filmstrips with sound, on tenure, budgeting, fundraising and other issues, proved especially valuable to the Board Mentors, the first cohort of whom completed their training in 1976.

Also in 1976, a new idea was tried out and promptly became a regular feature of AGB national conferences: special seminars for new trustees and for board chairmen and CEO's.

### **1977 Presidential Selection and Evaluation**

A study of presidential selection and presidential evaluation was carried out under the direction of John W. Nason, the results of which were incorporated in two more Nason publications made available to AGB members in 1978 and 1979.

Also in 1977: A set of model bylaws designed especially for small independent college boards was drawn up with the aid of competent attorneys, and a study was carried out for AGB that for the first time provided an accurate count of trustees, governing boards and campuses, with an analysis of trustee characteristics.

### **1978 An AGB Three-Year Plan; the Trustee Selection Project**

A several months' effort by the staff, with solid input from the Board of Directors, produced the Association's first long-range plan outlining directions and goals for the next three years.

Also in 1978: *Financial Responsibilities and Presidential Search* were published, and the first of a series of workshops for professional board staff secretaries was held.

A grant from the Carnegie Corporation helped launch one of AGB's most significant projects, a study by a blue-ribbon national commission of the processes of

trustee selection for both the private and public sectors.

### **1979 Handbook of Trusteeship, Financial Responsibilities Workshop and Slide Show**

Several other important projects were launched or carried out that bore fruit the following year, most notably the *Handbook of College and University Trusteeship*, edited by AGB Vice President Richard T. Ingram, completed by the end of 1979 and published early the next year, which at once became the authoritative source of information and advice on governance in higher education.

The Presidential Search Consultation Service was cosponsored with the Association of American Colleges.

### **1980 Distinguished Service Award; Office of Public Policy**

The first Distinguished Service Award in Trusteeship was presented to Atherton Bean, veteran trustee and former board chairman of Carleton College. This new and perhaps overdue form of recognition of trustee service was made possible by a grant from the Standard Oil Company (Ohio), and the following year an increase in the grant made possible the annual bestowal of the award on two individuals, one from each of the two sectors of higher education.

A combination of grants made possible the implementation of a decision of the board of directors to start an AGB Office of Public Policy with the mission of providing our members with more comprehensive coverage of public policy issues. Nancy Axelrod was appointed vice-president/programs and public policy.

Also in 1980: A major project designed to help the nation's 200 theological seminaries weather the difficult times ahead by helping their governing boards to improve

their performance was launched with a grant from the Lilly Endowment. Foreseen as products of the project are a *Manual of Theological School of Trusteeship* and an adaptation of AGB's Board-Mentor Service.

AGB joined the United Negro College Fund and two other associations in a project aimed at providing private historically black colleges with technical assistance to strengthen their management and governance.

### **1981 A New Three-Year Plan and the Trustee Institute**

By year's end, most of the first Three-Year Plan had been achieved or were being met; a new Plan for 1982- 84 prepared by the staff, again in consultation with the Board of Directors, set new objectives for the Association. Foremost among these was the establishment of a Trustee Institute to give formal training to trustees.

By the year's end, staff headquarters had moved into new offices in Suite 400, One Dupont Circle. The staff now numbers 21 persons, serving nearly a thousand boards and 24,000 individuals governing some 1,500 campuses in which about two-thirds of the total FTE student population were enrolled.

### **The Struggle Ahead**

Thus we have summarized seven years of rapid development. And we come to a time of new, intense stress for educational institutions of every kind. Community colleges, which in themselves were the newest and most rapidly growing feature of American education, are now feeling serious financial constraints. Reductions in the federal commitment to education have forced all institutions to review every element of their own programs. Even the most generously endowed and most selective institutions are forced to make painstaking exam-

inations of current practices and future prospects.

A nation with a history of unrivaled commitment to education faces a set of problems just the opposite of those causing such struggles a few short years ago.

In this scene the system of lay trusteeship continues to suffer attacks. State-related institutions have been increasingly consolidated under the general government of central boards, resulting perhaps in increased convenience for governors and legislators but at the possible cost of variety and vitality in the units themselves. State and federal functionaries have pressed their claims on institutions, claims of prior judgment, claims of audit and review, even claims of power to accredit institutions as a whole, to determine the degrees to be granted, the programs to be authorized or discontinued.

The continued pressure from governmental forces and from other parties at interest suggest that the voluntary portion of both governance and accreditation is no longer up to the job, if it ever was. The literature reflecting this kind of view has grown in volume from the time of Beck's first attack along with Hofstadter up to our own time. The complaints are fairly repetitious: the impropriety of having governance lodged with persons who have no competence as educators, the failure of such persons to address seriously the educational aspect of their institutions, which after all are their only reason for being; but contrariwise the feat of meddling by incompetents (if indeed trustees show interest in educational affairs); the dominance of corporate types on boards and the consequent tendency to advocate commercial rather than educational approaches to governance. And so on. And on.

For an association of governing boards, still other problems prevail. Is there any common ground for members of a board



serving a giant system (e.g., California, New York, Texas and the like) and one serving a small single-degree institution, or one serving a theological seminary? If so, what is it?

In financial terms alone, can an institution justify first the membership dues, and then perhaps the cost of attending an AGB meeting?

These and other questions persist as member boards are coming into the fold (at last) and then sometimes dropping out (economy) and then returning new board members, new sense of need, new leadership.

What continues to be lacking among even some of the most prestigious member institutions is a sense of proportion. If it be conceded that in principle the system of lay governance is sound, if it be conceded that even the most prestigious among them could benefit from a sense of nationwide association (or if not, that their membership could significantly contribute to the general well-being of the system), then the cost of membership and of attendance at meetings is a pretty

small price to pay in comparison with the potential benefits.

### Weighing Costs

Further, the institution which attempts on its own to provide for its board what comes from its AGB membership will almost certainly pay more in various ways and perhaps not for as good result. That is not to say that institutions should not have their own programs of trustee development. They should. But almost certainly the local efforts will be enhanced by the resources developed through even minimal participation in AGB.

It is nevertheless true that trustees/regents tend to respond most readily to their own kind as to type of institution. Should AGB then become more specialized? That would permit persons of like responsibility to consort and confer about their own kinds of problems. To some extent that opportunity is already provided in the group sessions. But is it enough?

These and other challenges are

addressed in the recently completed AGB three-year plan. It is another sign of maturity that within the last decade three such efforts have been made, beginning with the Nason report of 1974. When all is said and done, it is the conviction on the part of trustees themselves that will make the difference. There are those who wish to have officers of the Association elected by the popular ballot, for example. Others would like to have AGB become more of a direct lobby for education. For many people it is hard to maintain enthusiasm for an organization that does not engage in some kind of direct action, something that will demonstrate (if not financial profit or loss), at least some victory over something or somebody.

There is another way to view the matter. The cultivation of crops is a fair analogy. Education is more of a process of cultivation than of production, more concerned with aspects of development than with final achievement. Or to put it another way, one good crop does not guarantee another. And so the farmer must think of cycles, not of single years; and of many factors that ultimately affect the planting, the cultivation, and the harvest.

It is tempting to speculate whether the disturbances of the '60s and '70s might have been less damaging and costly to the institutions if something like AGB had already reached its present level of activity. It is certainly tempting to think that a network of experience and intelligence might have provided some better advance understanding of what was then arising and of what might have been done to ameliorate the pressures. Who can say? In our own time it well behooves all institutions to ensure for themselves leaders with breadth and depth of insight and comprehension. For without them sound, successful institutions cannot be sustained. ■



AGB senior staff in 1990 included (from left) Vice President for Publications Dan Levin, Vice President for Programs Jackie Woods, President Bob Gale, Vice President for Membership Rick Legon, and Executive Vice President Tom Ingram.

# AGB AT 70

## *From Survival to Service*

BY PETER HARTMAN, 1991

Nineteen ninety-one marks the 70th anniversary of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. As you might expect, the association's development has evolved to reflect the changes in higher education's governance system. As AGB celebrates 70 years of service to boards—public and private, institutional and system, governing and advisory now is a good time to look at how the association has changed with the times.

From its founding in 1921 until the early 1960s, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges was a loose affiliation of board members who took turns providing leadership and direction necessary to hold the organization together. The early organization operated as the Association of Governing Boards of State Universities and Allied Institutions, and its membership was open only to boards of public institutions. With the purpose of promoting contact among members, and without a salaried staff, the association's activities were limited to annual meetings of its various committees. Judge Ora Wildermuth, a trustee of Indiana University and one of AGB's presidents during the 1930s, was partial to AGB because "we have no ideals or objectives except to benefit by our contacts with each other."

### Voting Delegates

At the annual meetings, a quasi-legislative tone prevailed, and proposals were voted upon by the "delegates" in attendance. The delegates did not represent their boards or institutions in an official capacity, and the resolutions they passed carried no weight outside the meetings.

During the 1950s, recurring resolution

topics included pledges of support for preserving the "American way of life" and preparing our colleges and universities to be leaders in civil defense. At the 1960 annual meeting, it was resolved that the U.S. would "achieve ultimate victory over communism if we properly educate America's youth." Some other examples:

- Be it resolved that it is urged that governing boards encourage better organization of public information emanating from their administrative offices."
- "Be it resolved that boards of trustees and regents stand firmly for recognized courses in the major fields of general education as necessary parts of preparation for specialization, especially in the fields of agriculture, engineering, and their related branches."

Some of AGB's standing committees in 1960 reflected an odd dichotomy of issues: Space Utilization, Entrance Requirements, Legislative and Intergovernmental Relations, Public Relations, Regent Responsibility for University Participation in Education Abroad, Scholarship and Tuition Studies, and Television in Higher Education.

Members were concerned about the movement to consolidate existing institutionally based governing boards into statewide boards. AGB's Committee on

Legislation and Intergovernmental Relations resolved that the trend was "inimical to the best interest of higher education." Members vowed to go "directly to highly placed officers of government to explain and justify our mission," even though Article I of the AGB constitution at the time mandated that "no substantial part of the association's activities...shall involve the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation."

AGB's executive committee then resolved to "fight the movement to destroy local governance of higher education, elect a few leaders in each state who understand higher education, and will be willing to fight for it in the state legislatures."

### New Headquarters

Following the death of AGB secretary and Iowa State Board of Education member Richard Plock in 1959, University of Colorado Regent Virginia Blue assumed the newly created position of executive director. With member at a new high of 76, AGB's headquarters were moved from Plock's home in Burlington, Iowa, to Blue's in Denver. AGB was incorporated in Colorado in 1960 with the purpose of operating "exclusively for educational, scientific, and charitable purposes."

In 1963, the AGB Executive Committee voted to move the association's headquarters to Washington, D.C. AGB President and Texas A&M Regent John Newton said, "We believe that the growth of AGB during the past few years has brought the association to the point that it can take its place with

## Until the 1960s, the public took little interest in academic trusteeship, and little was written or known about the subject.

leading education agencies and organizations in our nation's capital." He cited three advantages in moving to D.C.: the presence of federal agencies concerned with higher education, of many leading higher education agencies, and of the executive offices of numerous philanthropic foundations.

At the same time, committee members voted to relocate in Washington, D.C., a proposal to open AGB membership to boards of independent institutions was voted down. Soon after, it was pointed out that the Carnegie Corporation "might be more interested" in assisting AGB if it changed its membership policy. A unanimous vote to open membership to independent institutions followed.

To quell concerns that boards of independent institutions would in time "dominate" the association, it was agreed that only six of the 15 executive committee slots be made available to them.

Ironically, AGB's first member from the independent sector, Athens College in Athens, Ala., soon became "too big of a financial burden" on the Methodist Church and was turned over to the state of Alabama. Athens State College enrolls 2,100 students.

After receiving a \$75,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation, AGB made the move to D.C., and J.L. Zwingle, a vice president at Cornell University, became AGB's executive vice president.

### Building Optimism

The early 1960s stand out as an especially significant period in AGB history. It was a time when the association's continued existence was in doubt, but with the help of foundation money, membership and productivity blossomed.

Building legitimacy for AGB with Washington's higher education community was a priority. Zwingle, however, encountered "the disturbing cynicism about the value of the lay board at any level of education, but particularly higher education." According to Zwingle, the feeling among colleagues was that "the concept of lay trusteeship is fundamentally sound, but it is better not to make much of it."

Initial efforts to establish cooperative programs with other higher education associations were unsuccessful. In a meeting with American Council on Education President Logal Wilson, Zwingle outlined ways ACE could help "in a great new venture," but he was told he was on his own. The next issue of AGB Reports nevertheless announced that Wilson and ACE "look forward to close cooperation with AGB and Dr. Zwingle."

The speeches and debates held at annual meetings and reprinted in the newsletter in the early 1960s were vague and ceremonial, lacking much practical information board members could use to formulate effective policies for their institutions. *AGB Reports* chronicled, at great length,

appointments to the various committees and the social activities of members. If AGB was to survive and become a viable organization, a "seriousness of purpose" needed to supplant the "reunion atmosphere" of AGB's activities.

The stony reaction AGB received in the nation's capital produced little optimism for the association's future. Zwingle asked the executive committee if he should "plan an orderly demise or wait for the sheriff."

### Helping Trustees

A step toward becoming an educational resource for trustees was taken with the development of the "School for Regents" in 1961. AGB promised the "school" would offer a wealth of practical advice with participants' "own interest." The four program sessions included fiscal and legislative matters, administrative responsibilities, academic responsibilities, and public relations.

A significant shift in the association's approach was about to occur. Zwingle and others realized that people were not really interested in AGB as an organization; rather, they wanted information that was not available elsewhere. The gatherings of "delegates" became "conferences" and "workshops." A calculated movement away from being an organization of trustees and toward becoming an organization for trustees was afoot.

AGB's first published book, *Handbook for College and University Regents*, was





released in 1964. Its intent was to “serve as a stimulus to all board members to ferret out and verbalize the policies and practices of their board and institution.” The handbook described meeting formats and agendas and discussed the board’s role in academic, financial, and student affairs, as well as athletics.

At the 1964 annual meeting, University of North Carolina President William Friday announced that for AGB “the door was opened for a more autonomous, more useful, and more productive and significant possibility of service.” He proclaimed that “the world of American higher education looks to this association with new hope and expectancy.”

### Activism Spurs Service

AGB’s emergence among higher education association coincided with the growth of activism on America’s campuses. Trustees were under scrutiny as never before, and a forum to exchange information on how to respond to these new challenges was in demand.

Attendance at the annual meetings grew, as did membership. Campus unrest became the central focus of the associa-

tion’s activities through the 1970s. From 1966 to 1970, annual meeting themes included: “The Changing Student Mood,” “Crisis on the Campus: Import for Governance,” “Boundaries of Academic Freedom,” and “The Trustee Role in Stabilizing the Campus.”

Board members were urged to redefine the purposes and goals of their institutions to help “nurture academic freedom and repel the attacks of society on academic institutions.”

Following Zwingle’s retirement in 1973, Robert L. Gale, a former Carleton College vice president and Peace Corps official, was appointed president of AGB. At the same time, a four-year grant in excess of \$1 million arrived from the Lilly Endowment. New programs and publications increased, and the association blossomed.

The centerpiece of the Lilly-funded effort was the development of the Board-Mentor Program, a board self-assessment workshop utilized by more than 350 boards to date. Other important projects of the 1970s included the studies on the board’s role in financial affairs, presidential selection, and presidential assessment; filmstrips on tenure, budgeting, and fundraising; and publications on many other important topics, as well as the first-ever nationwide survey of the composition and characteristics of governing boards.

The momentum created by the Lilly grant continues today. Virtually all of AGB’s currently available publications were produced during the 1980s. Other products of the last decade include the establishment of AGB’s Office of Public Policy, the Institute for Trustee Leadership, the National Center for Nonprofit Boards—a now-independent organization for trustees of nonprofit



organizations—and numerous workshops, seminars, and panels.

Until the 1960s, the public took little interest in academic trusteeship, and little was written or known about the subject. The enormous jump in college and university enrollment as the baby-boom generation reached adulthood and the activism during the Vietnam era increased the exposure of college and university management and the public’s interest in it.

It could be considered luck that a few committed individuals managed to hold AGB together until board members and presidents needed or wanted to be part of such an organization. One could say that AGB’s survival and subsequent explosion of activity is attributable to the emergence of controversy and accountability in college and university governance.

It is difficult to say whether an organization like AGB ever would have been formed had AGB dissolved before the 1960s. Because AGB is an organization of volunteers, not professionals, it is entirely possible that the development of programs and research on lay governance may have ended up dispersed among the sector-based higher education associations. ■

# GROWING PAINS LEAD TO MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BY CHARLES S. CLARK

**R**ichard T. Ingram—“Tom” to everyone who knows him—was a University of Maryland administrator and former high school teacher in 1968 when he was persuaded to help AGB with a project. He already was known to then-Executive Director J.L. Zwingle for the freelance work for which a professor had recommended him; under a grant from the U.S. Office of Education, Ingram was to compile a first-of-its-kind roster of 30,000 college and university trustees.

That work—done on IBM punch cards and carbon paper in an age long before cheap long-distance phone service, fax, or e-mail—had been planned in the Washington office AGB had occupied since 1964. It housed two full-timers and two part-timers crammed in a modest suite in a newly subdivided luxury apartment building formerly occupied by Andrew Mellon, the art patron and one-time U.S. Treasury secretary. (The building now houses the National Trust for Historic Preservation.) From modest beginnings in 1921, the association now had its first staff, thanks to the vision of leaders at the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Ingram was called to active duty in the U.S. Army in 1969 and spent time in Saigon as an operations research officer, returning in 1971 to resume work at AGB. Meanwhile, AGB had moved to the new National Center for Higher Education at One Dupont Circle.

AGB’s agenda during Ingram’s early years was clear from annual meeting themes in the years immediately preceding: “The Changing Student Mood,” “Crisis on the Campus: Import for Governance,” “Boundaries of Academic Freedom,” and “The Trustee Role in Stabilizing the Campus.” In the late 1960s,

trustees who had long been invisible to most students and the public were under attack as guardians of the status quo, and AGB was grappling with its transition from a quiet, informal network of volunteers to a dynamic, steadily funded, fully staffed professional association that worked for board members, rather than merely being of them.

Nationally, much was happening in higher education. The Supreme Court affirmed that students had free-speech rights. Traditional curricula, such as

those that required study of Latin, were being replaced by courses of study considered more “relevant.” To accommodate the sprawling baby-boom generation now of college age, some public universities were enrolling as many as 50,000 students. The 1972 amendments to the Higher Education Act would require states to create governing, coordinating, or planning boards, which complicated relations between state governments and institutions. The same legislation established Pell Grants to give federal money not to institutions but directly to low-income students to use at the college of their choice. And Title IX of the new law required all higher education institutions that receive federal dollars to demonstrate that they do not discriminate against women. Zwingle’s retirement in 1973 led the AGB board to select as president Robert L. Gale, former vice president of Carleton College and higher education development consultant. One of Gale’s first tasks was to dissuade Ingram from accepting a job to study the Maryland higher education system. Ingram soon became AGB’s executive vice president and a crucial link between the Zwingle and Gale eras.

Like many presidential transitions, the baton-pass from Zwingle to Gale required some cultural adjustments. Accustomed to addressing the previous leader as “Dr. Zwingle,” the staff was now to call the boss “Bob.” Where national conferences were staid affairs that drew 100–200 trustees,



Gale brought networking and fundraising prowess that built on Zwingle's solid foundation and boosted the association's effectiveness and stature.

Gale meant business. One of his first acts was to arrange for AGB to be legally incorporated, to protect it against liability and enable it to secure grants. No sooner was he on the job than he was on a plane to Indianapolis to meet grantmakers at the Lilly Endowment. The result was a pivotal million-dollar grant (larger than Gale had requested) and a pair of consultants to help AGB carry out its ambitious new mission of preparing citizens for the art of academic trusteeship.

The result over the next decade and a half was development of the sophisticated array of programs, services, and publications that are familiar to AGB members today. The new team launched the important Board-Mentor Workshops (now the Board Self-Study Workshops), created original trustee-orientation materials on such topics as finance and fundraising, conducted the first survey aimed at determining the backgrounds of those serving on college and university boards, performed a groundbreaking study of presidential selection and evaluation, and published much-emulated materials on the presidential search process.

During Gale's tenure, AGB also convened a Higher Education Issues Panel composed of distinguished Americans to help AGB members navigate the world of education policy. In 1991, the group pro-



duced an influential report, "Trustees and Troubled Times in Higher Education."

Meantime, the association had forged its identity with the placement of fine art on the cover of its flag-ship periodical *AGB Reports*, a practice that would be continued when the magazine became *Trusteeship* in 1993. The annual National Conference on Trusteeship, meanwhile, was expanded to include seminars for new trustees as well for board chairs, presidents, and chancellors. In time, the conference attracted the best thinkers in higher education governance as well as well-known speakers. Most important, the conferences became more interactive, allowing individual trustees greater opportunities to network with their peers to address their specific questions.

### **A Presidential Transition Amid Changing Times**

The announcement of Gale's retirement in 1992 prompted the AGB Board of Directors to launch a nationwide presidential search. After seven months of consideration, the association's leaders confirmed an early hunch. Ingram, as Gale would

recall, "knew more about academic trusteeship than anyone else."

The transition occurred at a parlous time for the higher education community. Federal and state appropriations had been flat or falling, and the federal government was about to embark on a disputatious new regulatory partnership that called on states to establish "SPREs" (State Postsecondary Review Entities). This short-lived program was intended to curb fraud and abuse in federal student-aid programs by requiring colleges and universities to submit data on such tricky measurements as graduation rates, standards for awarding credit hours, financial capacity, job placements for graduates, and compliance with health and safety regulations. In short, institutions were being asked to do more with less and hold themselves accountable.

Two months after assuming the presidency in March 1992, Ingram penned an article for *AGB Reports* titled "The End of Sanctuary." He wrote of pressures forcing boards to become more active while balancing the exercise of authority with restraint. "Higher education's status has





been severely shaken,” he wrote, “and the case for a larger share of limited tax dollars will be even more difficult to make. Trustees and regents are and will be on the hot seat for many years to come.”

Ingram soon implemented soon implemented a three-year strategic plan with several key priorities: more-focused programming, creation of direct services to boards and chief executives, expanded research on trusteeship and the academic presidency, strengthened capacity to track public-policy developments, and improvements in AGB’s internal information tracking and financial management.

AGB also created the Robert L. Gale Fund for the Study of Trusteeship, which over the years would award small grants of \$5,000-\$15,000. *Trusteeship* won a national award and member acclaim, as did the new strategic-issues periodical, *Priorities*. Recognizing the need to better serve boards in the different sectors of higher education, AGB reorganized itself internally around two new vice presidencies—one for public institutions and systems and another for independent institutions.

AGB’s interest in the special complex-

ities of public higher education expanded throughout the 1990s, particularly as membership was opened to foundations affiliated with public institutions. Also spurring greater interest in public higher education governance was a surge in so-called “trustee activism,” in which some boards were perceived unduly influenced by political agendas and too focused on micro-management. For all these reasons, and to build closer relationships between state



Rick Legon

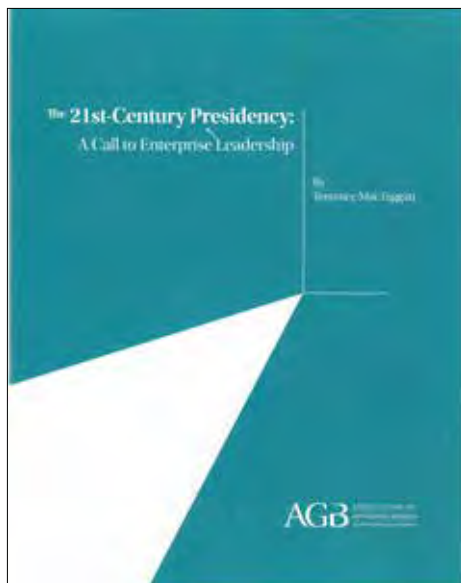
government and higher education, AGB in 2000 secured the grant money needed to establish the Center for Public Trusteeship and Governance.

Throughout this period, AGB’s ability to attract financial backing from corporations, foundations, and generous individuals—including AGB directors—grew steadily. Over the past quarter-century, the percentage of member dues as a proportion of revenues declined steadily from 78 percent to 61 percent, reflecting members’ increased use of AGB programs, services, and publications.

## A Beckoning Future

On the eve of another presidential transition—from Tom Ingram to former Executive Vice President Rick Legon—the association ended the 2005 fiscal year with the largest net increase in new-member boards in several years and in sound financial condition. Sales of AGB publications achieved a record high; National Conference on Trusteeship attendance and sponsorships enjoyed a banner year; and members took advantage of a new array of Board Education Services.





As Legon assumed the presidency, a strategic-planning process would position the association for effectiveness in service, research, and advocacy. White papers from a dozen higher education experts would address the challenges facing various sectors of the membership. Facilitated focus groups, a series of meetings with higher education thought leaders, formal conversations with the AGB Council of Board Chairs and Council of Presidents, and input from members would inform the planning process as it shaped the association's future direction.

Already, much effort has gone into developing a full-featured, revitalized Web site that will change the way



members learn about higher education governance and conduct business with the association. The new site gives members quick and easy access to common questions about trusteeship and enables them to gather information to important higher education and governance issues.

The new site's enhanced capabilities also include an improved online bookstore as well as features that allow members to register for conferences and workshops and update their personal information. In addition, the new site contains custom channels with specialized information for board members, presidents and administrators, and board professionals.



The dedication of the AGB staff to personal service is largely responsible for the association's continuing success. The staff member with whom a trustee, chief executive, or board professional speaks by telephone is the person who fulfills the book order, supplies the model bylaw, or completes the conference registration. Members value the way AGB staff help them focus on their responsibilities in serving their institutions.

The result: 97 percent of AGB members continue to renew their affiliation from one year to the next, testifying to the robust loyalty of our member boards and chief executives. <sup>11</sup>

**As Legon assumed the presidency, a strategic-planning process would position the association for effectiveness in service, research, and advocacy.**

# THE RECENT HISTORY OF AGB

2006–2021

**AGB** has evolved with the needs of its members to serve higher education institutions, and ultimately students, throughout its 100-year history—and the last 15 years are no exception. With a momentum to move higher education forward despite any challenge, AGB has worked to become a trusted advisor regarding institutional governance to its members and to the higher education sector at large. AGB's accomplishments in these past 15 years show that the only national organization providing university and college presidents, board chairs, and individual trustees with the resources they need to enhance their effectiveness has been successful in its goal to be the trusted source to advance the practice of citizen trusteeship and help ensure the quality and success of our nation's colleges and universities.

"We are a trusted voice," said Richard Legon, who was the president and CEO of AGB from 2005–2019. "In fact, embedded in one of the associations strategic plans with which I was proud to be a part of, that was actually an objective. That AGB would increase its influence by becoming the trusted voice on issues of governance, obviously, but also on broader matters facing higher education."

Higher education has always been connected closely with the historical events in society. As a result, AGB has played a significant role through much of that time in helping boards evolve in various epochs of its history, including in its recent history.

"The relevance of AGB is still very much connected to what's happened in history, how higher ed has worked through those moments and the changing role of boards. So by necessity, AGB had to be relevant to help those volunteers who served on the boards address the challenges that were confronting their respective institutions," said Legon.

One of the most unique aspects of AGB throughout its history, and especially in the

last 15 years, is its adaptability and responsiveness to its members.

"We're a listening organization. We never stopped reaching out to draw from our members what their concerns are. And we worked really, really hard to make sure, again, that they saw AGB as an organization they could trust and that they could rely on, again, both for making sure that their boards and their presidents understood the basics of best practice in the boardroom while also supporting some of the initiatives that I think define the association," explained Legon.

Over the last decade and a half, higher education has faced numerous changes. Some of these challenges include student demographic shifts, less funding for public institutions, the rising cost of higher education, an increasingly skeptical public perception of the value of higher education, a growing need for understanding risk management and crisis communications, and business-model pressures, which have caused some institutions to merge or close. Many of these challenges continue to drive boards to be even more committed than

ever to their work to ensure successful student outcomes and the financial viability of their institutions.

A new era of the association began with Henry Stoeber becoming AGB's fifth president and CEO in July 2019. In the short time since, AGB has sought to provide even more member service and engagement by increasing digital content and virtual engagement and has faced the unexpected crisis of the global COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on higher education.

Throughout all of the challenges and changes, AGB continues to serve its members and be an organization that others can look to and rely on to help boards and institutions respond to the crises and emerge stronger and more resilient. Upon celebrating AGB's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, now is an ideal moment to review AGB's recent history in the last 15 years, from 2006 to the present in 2021.

One of the most significant moments driving AGB at the beginning this most recent 15 years in AGB history was the implementation of a five-year strategic plan that AGB's board of directors approved in 2006. That five-year plan that highlighted some key priorities: research, service, communications, and advocacy. AGB committed itself to fulfilling these priorities during that time period.

"We saw opportunities to build additional businesses within the construct of the association. A couple of years into my leadership, we established an organization that conducted presidential searches and some number of years after that, we



launched a subsidiary to our consulting work that worked on strategic direction, mergers, acquisitions, and other bold initiatives that colleges and universities are facing, and all of these initiatives have helped to broaden the AGB brand,” said Legon. “With the support of our own fiduciary body, our board of directors has historically been able to take risks and for the betterment of the community we serve and the organization’s stability itself.”

AGB’s Board Education & Consulting Service (BECS) was launched in 2006. In 2007, AGB expanded its offerings to include comprehensive presidential assessments and intercollegiate athletics oversight, as well as the “Consultant on Call” and presidential coaching services. All of

these improved members’ ability to learn and interact with AGB. AGB’s consulting services have continued to grow and be beneficial to members.

Improving communications was also a key priority during this period. AGB Press was established in 2006, providing more publications and accessible materials for members. In 2007, *Trusteeship* magazine was redesigned to look more modern. This redesign led *Trusteeship* to receive a Gold EXEL Award from the Society of National Association Publications (now known as the Association of Media & Publishing) in 2008. The J.L. Zwingle Library and Resource Center also became searchable online in 2008. In 2010, this online resource center was improved upon with the AGB

Knowledge Center on AGB’s website. The Knowledge Center provided, and still provides today, quick access to governance resources, FAQs, and publications. The Knowledge Center has been further revamped in recent years to provide access to an even wider array of materials and resources.

As part of AGB’s commitment to research and service, the association continuously adapting its resources to match the evolving role of trustees. In January 2007, AGB released the *AGB Board of Directors’ Statement on Board Accountability* to clarify the role and expectations for boards and trustees. This statement especially highlighted how important governance became for governing boards and



why the role of a trustee evolved into a true leader in higher education who must uphold integrity, help achieve the institution's mission, and ensure that they are earning the public's trust.

AGB also expanded its involvement and voice in public policy as part of their advocacy priority. In 2007, AGB created a Trustee Advocacy Network to help elected officials and policy makers gain a deeper understanding of the effects of public policy on higher education governance. The network, with the consent of member institutions, encouraged trustees to discuss certain public policy issues with elected officials in Congress and the states.

One constant in these most recent 15 years of history is the large and growing concern about the rising cost of higher education. In response to these concerns, AGB launched the Cost Project in 2006 to engage these issues as they began. The project produced four papers that discussed strengthening board capacity for financial oversight over the next few years. These papers aimed to help colleges and universities build their ability to effectively and strategically monitor institutional costs. The project also led to AGB's work in strategic finance.

AGB has continually responded to emerging important issues facing higher education. One critical issue that has arisen as of paramount importance to boards is risk management. AGB made it a priority to address risk management in its resources for members. On this important issue, and others like crisis communication and fiscal challenges, AGB has helped prepare boards for these challenges that will arise,

focusing on board accountability in periods of change.

The unexpected Great Recession of 2008–2009 was another moment in recent history when AGB rose to the challenge of serving boards in times of unprecedented change. The recession destabilized higher education institutions, which led to hiring freezes, travel bans, delays in building projects, and other cost-cutting moves, not dissimilar to moves that institutions are having to make today. The recession also had a major impact on funding and giving. AGB, like today, was there to support the boards and show them how to engage and become more informed as their work became more central and more visible.

The recession was a catalyst for AGB to launch the Governance for Student Success project, supported by the Lumina Foundation for Education. This project was completed in 2011 and focused on

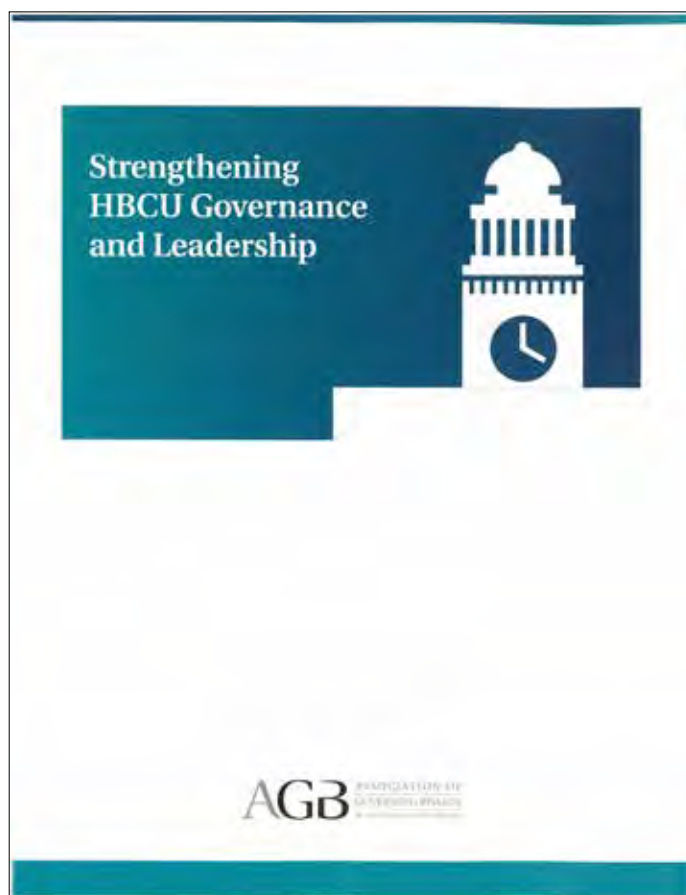
three main components for success in higher education: quality, leadership, and strategic finance. AGB Consulting built a new area based off the strategic finance component. This area of consulting focused on helping institutions monitor costs and enhance transparency and accountability.

Continuing to implement new and innovative ways to serve members, AGB established AGB Search in 2010, which picked up on search work AGB conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. AGB Search has since conducted hundreds of searches for highly qualified presidents and top leadership.

In 2011, AGB's Board of Directors approved a new five-year plan, Vision 2016. This plan in part addressed the need

to respond to the extended period of financial uncertainty, started by the recession. AGB planned to continue emphasizing their leadership role as the most trusted advisor for boards, presidents, and other institutional leaders. It started expanding on AGB's programs, services, and research. This included using new technologies to create more online resources for members. AGB also ensured it would continue its advocacy work and decided to focus on its business model to ensure that the organization was effectively serving members while also finding ways to expand commitment to consulting and other non-membership due sources.

Advancing its advocacy work, AGB released the report, *Front and Center*, in 2011 calling for the federal government to rethink its role in higher education. AGB encouraged the federal government to emphasize support for student aid and





engage less in issues that threaten institutional independence.

Another aspect of AGB's role as a trusted advisor is responding to the constantly changing leadership roles in higher education. As institutionally related foundations evolved into active fundraisers on behalf of their institutions, AGB adapted to include more resources for foundations. Over the years, AGB has published books, *Trusteeship* articles, blog posts, and podcast episodes on the role of foundations and fundraising. The annual Foundation Leadership Forum offers support and profes-

sional development for foundation leaders to learn how to work with governing boards and adapt to the challenges and changes.

Many external influences, from the public to government, continually drive governing boards to adjust their roles. The early 2010s saw a growing public distrust in the value of higher education, along with growing government influence and regulatory oversight. To counter this growing distrust, AGB focused on student matters in 2012. The association began working on a two-year grant from the Teagle Foundation to improve board oversight of student learn-

ing. AGB also partnered with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) and the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation to address policy issues related to institutional financial aid.

An example of growing government oversight was when the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) proposed changes to the definition of a "municipal advisor" that had unintended consequences for governing boards in 2011. AGB worked to educate the SEC on these consequences, namely that it would impact the governing boards ability to conduct their fiduciary

## The History of AGB Public Policy and Advocacy

For decades, AGB has leveraged its expertise to influence public policy at the state and federal levels, representing governance best practices to lawmakers and the public on issues that are important to boards and higher education at large. This work has evolved as the need for clear policy analysis and effective advocacy has mounted amid the pressing challenges facing colleges and universities.

AGB delivers timely, concise policy communications to provide the necessary context for board members to engage in informed decision making and advocacy alongside their institutions, foundations, systems, and state coordinating agencies. The association offers policy-related resources such as the Top Public Policy Issues series, AGB Policy Alerts, *Trusteeship* articles,

blog posts, and more to prepare board members to respond to policy changes. While the specific issues of importance to higher education may change from year to year, AGB has worked with member institutions on priorities that broadly affect student success and institutional vitality, including affordability, Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA), accreditation, shared governance, the value proposition of higher education, and many others.

AGB staff also delivers direct testimony or position statements on relevant issues, highlighting best practices for state and federal lawmakers on topics related to board composition and governance, board authority and independence, and institutional autonomy. Over the years, AGB has spoken with or testified to federal



authorities such as the United States Senate, U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, U.S. Department of Education, National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), and numerous state legislatures, lending higher education expertise and a national perspective to policy discussions. AGB is also a member of the Washington Higher Education Secretariat, through which it participates



in multi-association advocacy campaigns to strengthen and protect higher education governance through federal policy.

AGB has served as a trusted advisor to states in ongoing board member education efforts. AGB has partnered with policymakers to establish, organize, and elevate board member education programs in more than 20 states, many on an annual or biannual basis.

duties and discourage people from serving on boards. After a successful three-year campaign by AGB, ending in 2013, the SEC decided to exempt college and university board members from the commissions oversight rules that changed the definition of a “municipal advisor.”

“It was such a minute issue in terms of awareness among panoply of other public policy issues that it just didn’t resonate, didn’t get much attention, but we saw it,” said Legon, who was serving as AGB president at the time. “I take great pride in how AGB stepped up, showed courage that our own board of directors recognize that at a certain level, prevailing on this policy debate would have a great deal to do with the future of volunteerism, especially in higher ed. And that it was a debate we could ill afford to lose. And we fought that battle for nearly three years, constantly with a dedicated support of internal staff, external experts and our board until we ultimately prevailed.”

AGB also recommitted to the unique mission of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and increased its HBCU-specific offerings in 2013 (and beyond). One of these offerings in 2013 was a meeting of more than 20 presidents, board members, and other leaders from the community for a discussion about the vision for HBCUs in 2020 and what governance and leadership was needed to achieve it.

“A piece of work that I think AGB needs to take pride in, is its constant commitment to Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” said Legon. This is a unique sector. the establishment of our early HBCUs at a time when setting up or establishing historically black institutions was not optional because it was the only place that African American kids could even have the most remote chance of a higher education and things have evolved and wonderfully, there’s greater opportunities today for African Americans to benefit from a higher

education at any institution they choose to go. But these HBCUs, which have declined in number because of those opportunistic reasons for the most part, have a history that’s often related to some challenges in board governance. And AGB, with multiple projects and commitment and staff and just a recognition that we couldn’t afford to lose, the impact of the HBCUs that are still with us, spend a lot of time and energy on helping Historically Black Colleges and Universities to strengthen and improve and have a continuous program of education for the men and women serving on their boards.”

In 2013, AGB expanded its services to presidents to strengthen the partnership between boards and presidents. AGB, with AGB Search, launched a program in 2014 that was exclusive to presidents called the Presidential Initiative. This program aimed to strengthen presidential leadership through successful governance.

Throughout the 2010s a growing wave

## AGB Consulting

Throughout its history, AGB has recognized that colleges, universities, and institutionally related foundations continuously evaluate their missions, processes, and business models as they seek to become more sustainable in the increasingly competitive higher education marketplace. To help serve the needs of its members, AGB started its Board Education & Consulting Service (BECS) in 2006. BECS evolved to become AGB Consulting to offer a broader

range of customized member services.

Today AGB’s team of advisors provides institutions and foundations—and their governing boards and leaders—with support, solutions, tools, and thought partnership to enable them to make sound, strategic, and transformational decisions in the face of complex and evolving challenges. AGB Consulting helps institutions accomplish the following: (1) build capacity for justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion (JDE&I); (2) adapt, transform,

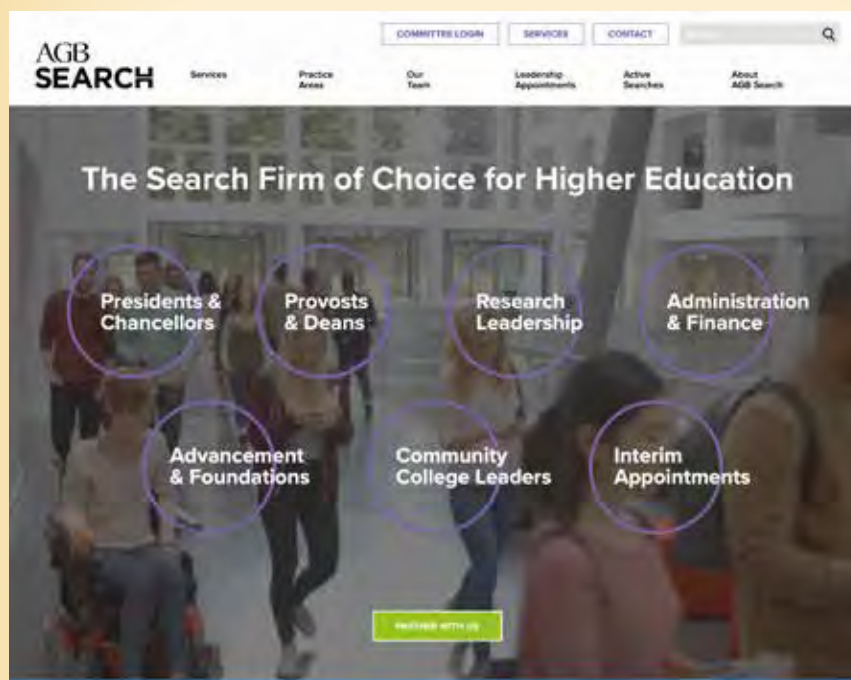
and innovate to achieve financial sustainability and growth; (3) develop high-performing, strategic boards; (4) develop highly effective presidents, CEOs, and leaders; (4) build foundations that are effective, strategic, long-term partners for their institutions; (5) engage in strategic and financial planning; (6) evolve their business models to align to the market; (7) lead equitable and innovative shared governance initiatives; (8) establish and implement high-performing practices and policies.

AGB Consulting’s advisors conduct more than 150 successful engagements each year for public and private higher education institutions, systems, and institutionally related foundations. AGB Consulting advisors are experts in higher education. As experienced board members, presidents, CEOs and subject matter experts, our advisors are intimately familiar with higher education trends, the administration and operation of institutions and foundations, and the dynamics of the boardroom.

of student demonstrations across the country demanding equality and inclusivity and pushing campus leadership to make these changes was yet another example of outside forces pushing governing boards to respond and change. To help governing boards navigate these tensions, AGB published two publications: the *AGB Board of Directors' Statement on Governing Board Accountability for Campus Climate, Inclusion, and Civility* in 2016, and *Freedom of Speech on Campus: Guidelines for Governing Boards and Institutional Leaders* in 2017. These statements address free speech on campus and academic freedom, as well as explain the importance of finding a balance between the mission and history of the institutions and the current values and principles found within the institution's community.

When boards go above and beyond in their work, AGB recognizes them. AGB has been recognizing boards with The John W. Nason Award for Board Leadership. Previously, the Distinguished Service Award was established in 1980, which had been given to outstanding individual trustees, one from a public institution and one from a private one. Between 1980–2004, 47 trustees were presented with the Distinguished Service Award before the award was relaunched as the John W. Nason Award for the Advancement of Academic Trusteeship be given to any board, institution, organization, government body, or individual in 2004. This award was not presented on any regular interval but rather when merited for exceptional service to trusteeship. In 2015, the award was again reimagined as the AGB John W. Nason Award for Board Leadership and has since been presented to boards as a whole on an annual basis. This award highlights boards that have demonstrated innovation and exemplary leadership. This award continues to draw attention to boards that set an

## AGB Search



Founded in 2010 as an affiliate of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), AGB Search is a national search firm that has assisted with more than 700 full-time executive and interim searches at over 400 institutions and organizations. This experience includes over 220 successful presidential searches and hundreds of other executive-level positions at colleges, universities, and university systems throughout the country.

AGB Search's work spans 46 states and the

U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and Guam serving public and private colleges and universities with annual budgets ranging from below \$20 million and more than \$1.5 billion, endowments ranging from \$25 million to \$7.3 billion, and total enrollments ranging from under 500 to more than 90,000 students. AGB Search conducts approximately 80–90 successful searches for higher education executives annually and has a 98 percent successful placement rate overall. In addition to higher education searches, AGB Search

offers interim executive search services and our Compensation Evaluation Service.

AGB Search has grown to a team of more than 40 executive search consultants, all with significant experience in recruiting, vetting, and mentoring prospective leaders in the field of higher education. More than 90 percent of search consultants are former presidents or senior executives of public and private four-year institutions, state and university systems, and community and two-year colleges.



## AGB PUBLICATIONS 2003–2021

### 2003

- Board Responsibilities in Academic Affairs
- How Public College and University Foundation Boards Contribute to Campaign Success
- New Trustee Orientation Independent Version
- New Trustee Orientation Public Version
- Top Public Policy Issues for Higher Education: 2003–2004
- The Board's Role in Accreditation
- Top Public Policy Issues for Higher Education: 2007–2008

### 2008

- AGB Glossary of Financial Terms
- The Cost Project
- The Information Mosaic: Strategic Decision Making for Universities and Colleges
- The New Ethics of Trusteeship: How Public College and University Trustees Can Meet Higher Public Expectations
- The Role of the Board Professional

### 2005

- Illustrative Bylaws for Public College and University Governing Boards
- Margin of Excellence: The New Work of Higher Education Foundations
- Securing the Future: A Fund-Raising Guide for Boards of Independent Colleges and Universities
- Top Public Policy Issues for Higher Education: 2005–2006

### 2006

- A Guide to Updating the Board's Conflict of Interest Policy
- Making the Grade: How Boards Can Ensure Academic Quality
- Strategic Finance: Planning and Budgeting for Boards, Chief Executives, and Finance Officers
- The Board's Role in Strategic Planning
- The Leadership Imperative
- The President's Role in Board Development

### 2007

- Strategic Budgeting

### 2009

- Effective Governing Boards: A Guide for Members of Governing Boards of Independent Colleges, Universities, and Systems
- Financial Responsibilities
- Strategic Imperatives: New Priorities for Higher Education
- The AGB Survey of Higher Education Governance
- Top Public Policy Issues for Higher Education: 2009–2010

### 2010

- Assessing Presidential Effectiveness: A Guide for College and University Governing Boards
- Effective Governing Boards: A Guide for Members of Governing Boards of Public Colleges, Universities, and Systems



- Policies, Practices, and Composition of Governing Boards of Independent Colleges and Universities
- Policies, Practices, and Composition of Governing Boards of Public Colleges, Universities, and Systems
- Succession Planning for the Higher Education Presidency
- Technology in Context: 10 Considerations for Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities
- The Student Affairs Committee
- The 2011 AGB Survey of Higher Education Governance
- Top Public Policy Issues for Higher Education: 2011–2012

### 2011

- Effective Governing Boards: A Guide for Members of Governing Boards of Independent Colleges and Universities, 2nd Edition
- Fundraising Advice for College and University Presidents: An Insider's Guide
- Leading Change: How Boards and Presidents Build Exceptional Academic Institutions
- Policies, Practices, and Composition of Institutionally Related Foundation Boards
- The Audit Committee
- The Investment Committee

### 2012

- Foundations for the Future: The Fundraising Role of Foundation Boards at Public Colleges and Universities
- Making the Grade: How Boards Can Ensure Academic Quality, 2nd Edition
- Presidential Search: An Overview for Board Members
- The Development Committee
- The Executive Committee
- The Facilities Committee

### 2013

- A Complete Guide to Presidential Search for Universities and Colleges
- Effective Foundation Boards: A Guide for Members of Institutionally Related Foundation Boards
- Risk Management: An Accountability Guide for University and College Boards
- The Board's Role in Fundraising





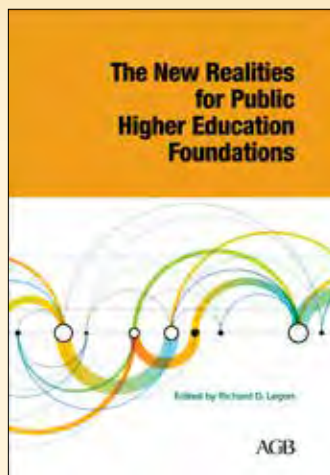
- The Compensation Committee
- The Finance Committee
- The Governance Committee (Independent Institutions)
- Top Public Policy Issues for Higher Education: 2013–2014
- Top 10 Strategic Issues for Boards 2013–2014
- Updating Board Bylaws: A Guide for Colleges and Universities
- What Board Members Need to Know About Faculty

## 2014

- Effective Governing Boards: A Guide for Members of Governing Boards of Independent Colleges and Universities, 3rd Edition
- The Academic Affairs Committee
- The Governance Committee (Foundation Boards)
- Understanding Foundation Finances: Financial Oversight and Planning for Foundation Boards

## 2015

- Shared Governance in Times of Change: A Practical Guide for Universities and Colleges



- The Board's Role in Financial Oversight
- Top 10 Campus Legal Issues for Boards
- Top Public Policy Issues for Higher Education: 2015–2016
- What Board Members Need to Know About Enrollment Management

## 2016

- Effective Board Chairs: A Guide for University and College Chairs
- Legal Primer for Board Operations
- Policies, Practices, and Composition of Governing and Foundation Boards 2016
- Top Strategic Issues for Boards 2016–2017

## 2017

- Advisory Councils in Higher Education
- Endowment Management for Higher Education
- Freedom of Speech on Campus: Guidelines for Governing Boards and Institutional Leaders
- Strategic Thinking and Planning in Higher Education: A Focus on the Future



- Top Public Policy Issues for Higher Education: 2017–2018
- The Role of the Board Professional, 2nd Edition

## 2018

- A Complete Guide to Presidential Search for Universities and Colleges, 2nd Edition
- An Anatomy of Good Board Governance in Higher Education
- Assessing Board Performance: A Practical Guide for College, University, System, and Foundation Boards
- Presidential Compensation: A Comprehensive Guide for Higher Education Governing Boards and Chief Executives
- Restructuring Committees
- Top Strategic Issues for Boards 2018–2019
- What Board Members Need to Know About Cybersecurity

## 2019

- Best-Practice Guidelines for the Continuing Engagement of Former Board Members
- Higher Education Governing Boards: An Introductory Guide for Members of College, University, and System Boards
- Institutionally Related Foundation Boards: An Introductory Guide for Board Members



- The Governance Committee (Public Institutions)
- Top Public Policy Issues for Higher Education: 2019–2020

## 2020

- Assessing and Developing College and University Presidents
- Crisis Leadership for Boards and Presidents: Anticipating, Managing, and Leading Beyond Pandemics, Disruptions, and Ethical Failures
- Risk Management, Second Edition: An Accountability Guide for University and College Boards
- The New Realities for Public Higher Education Foundations
- Top Strategic Issues for Boards 2020–2021
- Understanding Enrollment Management: A Guide for College and University Board Members

## 2021

- Fundraising Campaigns in Higher Education: A Practical Guide for Governing and Foundation Board Members

example of going above and beyond in their work.

In 2017, to continue the effort to combat the public's skepticism towards higher education, AGB launched the Guardians Initiative. This national advocacy campaign engaged governing board members to speak up for higher education and to change the tone and substance of the public's perception. The Guardians Initiative highlighted the broadening role of the trustee as well as helping trustees be effective

storytellers. The initiative aimed to show that higher education benefits American society as a whole.

Public policy and advocacy became a higher priority for AGB in its recent history. In 2017, AGB issued a statement in response to President Trump's decision to rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, launched by the Obama administration in 2012 that allowed undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children to

remain in the country. AGB emphasized the hard-working individuals who embody American values that would be hurt by rescinding this program. AGB's then-president Richard Legon joined other association board officers in signing a letter to President Trump and congressional leaders urging them to find a permanent solution to ensure these individuals had a place in American society and in U.S. higher education.

Listening to member concerns to better address their needs has always been a key

## The History of the John W. Nason Award for Board Leadership

The Nason Award, established in 1992 and presented in partnership with TIAA, invokes the example of its namesake, John Nason (1905–2001), the Swarthmore College president who during World War II led the effort to find places at 600 colleges and universities for nearly 4,000 American students of Japanese ancestry who'd been interned in relocation camps. Recipients of this annual award are an honor for trustees who have demonstrated backbone, foresightedness, and determination in fulfilling their role as the financial stewards of their institutions' future as well as their current course.

The original John W. Nason Award was first bestowed in 1992 to the Minnesota legislature for establishing the first-of-its-kind Regent Candidate Advisory Council. Having created this body in 1988 to instill merit considerations in public higher education trustee appointments, the legislature

was praised for recognizing "outstanding citizen leaders for the University of Minnesota and the need for objective judgment in selecting trustees" as well as for its "willingness to share its appointive powers."

The second Nason Award was given in 1998 to the Board of Trustees of Adelphi University in New York. The accompanying proclamation cited "the personal courage of 18 men and women who willingly took on the extraordinary task of restoring the integrity of and public confidence in" their institution. (Adelphi had been rocked by a scandal involving excessive presidential compensation that had prompted the New York state regents to take the unusual step of disbanding the board of the independent institution and enlisting a new board of volunteers.)

In recasting the Nason Award, AGB seeks to draw public attention to deserving

academic boards and the fine people who serve on them, while at the same time honoring a great leader in American higher education.

AGB's Distinguished Service Award was established in 1980, which had been given to outstanding individual trustees, one from a public institution and one from a private one. Between 1980–2004, 47 trustees were presented with the Distinguished Service Award before the award was relaunched as the John W. Nason Award for the Advancement of Academic Trusteeship to be given to any board, institution, organization, government body, or individual in 2004. This award was not presented on any regular interval but rather when merited for exceptional service to trusteeship. The criteria established in 2004 was that the Nason Award could be given to any board, institution, organization,

government body, or individual demonstrating the following: exceptional leadership and initiative; distinctive scholarly contributions that have made a difference in strengthening the institution of citizen trusteeship in higher education; or unusual courage in the face of adversity or heroic achievement in a challenging situation or for an endeavor that greatly benefited a college or university and its community—in a way that serves as a model for other boards to emulate.

In 2015, the award was again reimagined as the AGB John W. Nason Award for Board Leadership and has since been presented to boards as a whole on an annual basis. This award highlights boards that have demonstrated innovation and exemplary leadership. This award continues to draw attention to boards that set an example of going above and beyond in their work.

aspect of AGB's work to foster member engagement and provide better resources. A significant tool to accomplish this has been the AGB Trustee Index. Partnering with Gallup, AGB has released three of these reports since 2017. These reports are surveys of college and university board members about which issues they see as the most pressing facing their institutions and higher education as a whole. In the past several years, these surveys have revealed the growing concern of trustees in the future of higher education. This

concern stems from financial sustainability, the price of higher education, the public's perception of higher education, and the decrease in funding from states.

As AGB neared its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a new vision and mission were crafted to carry AGB into the next century of its work. The new vision statement is: "College, university, and foundation board members are indispensable, strategic partners with institutions to fulfill their unique commitments to society, advance student success and well-being, and enhance

institutional vitality." The new mission statement is: "AGB empowers college, university, and foundation boards and board members to govern with knowledge and confidence, providing guidance and thought leadership through expert services and resources."

As part of this new mission, AGB enhanced and optimized the AGB member experience. This new membership experience includes more individually focused benefits, access to AGB's entire digitized library, annual governance reviews for each

## The John W. Nason Award for Board Leadership Recipients Since 2015

### 2020–2021

- American University of Beirut
- Colorado State University Foundation
- Diné College
- Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University
- University of Tennessee System
- University of Vermont Foundation

### 2019–2020

- Anne Arundel Community College
- Arizona State University Enterprise Partners
- Loyola Marymount University
- McDaniel College
- Parker University
- Southern Oregon University

### 2018–2019

- Furman University
- Haverford College
- Kansas State University Foundation
- St. John's University
- Miami University
- Youngstown State University

### 2017–2018

- Agnes Scott College
- Augsburg University
- California State University System
- Ohio University
- Unity College

### 2016–2017

- Beacon College
- CETYS University
- The College of William & Mary Foundation
- The Ohio State University
- Whittier College

### 2015–2016

- Chatham University
- Maricopa County Community College District
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- Mitchell Hamline School of Law
- Randolph College
- University of North Georgia Foundation

## About John W. Nason

### John W. Nason (1905–2001)

was a higher education leader who served as a pioneer on behalf of the importance of effective good governance. He began his professional life as a philosophy professor and went on to serve as president of Swarthmore College and Carleton College, as well as the president of the Foreign Policy Association. He honored AGB by serving as the director of its Commission on the Future of College and University Trusteeship and made immense contributions to the field of higher education governance and boards, including authoring seven books—two of which are seminal works on the role and responsibilities of college and university board members. Perhaps his greatest accomplishment was serving as chairman of the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council during World War II. Resisting widespread prejudice and rejecting the disruption of higher education for thousands of students, Mr. Nason negotiated the release of interned Japanese-American students and persuaded higher education institutions to allow them to continue their studies. Under his guidance, the council matched more than 4,000 students with campuses across the nation.



SWARTHMORE COLLEGE





board, up-to-date information about public policy and advocacy, and in-depth solutions via AGB's Consulting and Search services. This enhanced membership ensures that AGB is continuing to earn the trust that members have in the association.

Access to AGB's entire library is an important new membership benefit which led to the digital-first publishing strategy. This strategy involved digitizing books and launching a new website in 2020 so that members could have AGB resources more readily available to them. *Trusteeship* magazine, AGB's flagship bimonthly publication, also launched a digital edition that is a replica of the print version so members can view the magazine exactly as it appears on electronic devices such as computers and mobile devices. The digital edition of *Trusteeship* complements the print version and the text-only version on the AGB website, which created multiple ways for members to access the magazine according to their reading preferences.

When the global COVID-19 pandemic hit the nation in March 2020, AGB created a Coronavirus Resource Center to have a quick way for members to get information they needed on governing through the pan-

demie and dealing with all the effects, from virtual learning to financial strain, that came with it. At this time, AGB was only one month away from the annual National Conference on Trusteeship. AGB had to make a fast pivot from in-person conference to a virtual conference experience at record speed.

In 2020, AGB also launched the Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (JDE&I) Initiative. This initiative was started in response to the national protests over racial injustice that exposed the systemic inequities on campuses and broader communities. "This initiative will showcase AGB's promise to pursue and uphold JDE&I within our own AGB culture and embrace these values across our practices, programs, services, and research as we engage in our own transformation to better serve higher education," said AGB President and CEO Henry Stoever.

As AGB enters their 100<sup>th</sup> year, the association has focused its commitment to create inclusive, strategic boards with two initiatives: JDE&I and the Principles of Trusteeship, a set of nine principles designed to enhance the effectiveness of individual board members. With these two

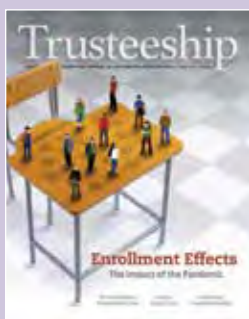
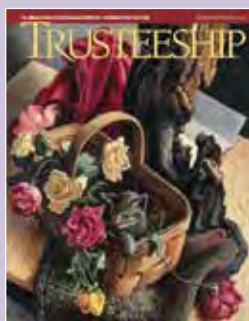
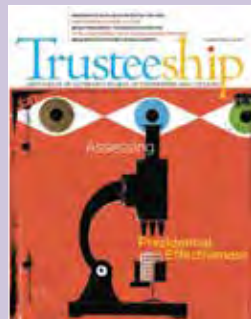
initiatives, AGB will continue to build and earn the trust from members as a trusted advisor in the field of higher education.

AGB has passion for helping to empower trustees to understand what they need to know, and one way of accomplishing this is by strengthening board-president-leadership teams. "It's a collaborative partnership that is required for an institution or for any organization to thrive into the future—that's really the key aspect of why members join AGB is to help them form a robust and dynamic relationship between the leadership team and the president and the board. AGB helps shape and inform board members and a AGB helps shape and inform leadership team members and presidents, so that they too can inform board members on key topics that are relevant for the institutional strategy to the future," said Stoever.

AGB is committed to serving boards and campus leaders today and well into the future.

"With AGB's 100 years of experience, we have a knowledge base for boards that is more robust than any other organization and we are passionate about helping our members," said Stoever. ■





# AGB TODAY AND TOMORROW

**A**GB IS PASSIONATE about empowering board members to serve as strategic thought partners with their presidents and leadership teams, focusing on such important matters as student success and institutional vitality in the post-COVID-19 world. As AGB celebrates its 100th year, AGB President and CEO Henry Stoever provides insights into the significance of the association's role in the ever-changing landscape of higher education and its priorities for years to come.

## TRUSTEESHIP: Why do you think AGB is so important to higher education governance?

**STOEVER:** AGB is critically important to higher education governance. Given that many board members come from outside of higher education where decision-making is typically very different, AGB provides them with important knowledge and understanding about the best higher ed governance practices. We also offer boards abundant resources about issues of importance to colleges, universities, and higher education foundations. We suggest proven approaches to problems facing our member institutions. Our consulting and search practices make available to the higher education community unparalleled expertise. In addition to our focus on board members, we are equally committed to working productively with presidents and their leadership teams, including board professionals, who work closely with and depend on the expertise and the support of their boards.

## TRUSTEESHIP: What is one of the key ways in which AGB helps educate trustees about governance?

**STOEVER:** One of AGB's primary areas of focus is fostering an effective board chair-president partnership. A healthy chair-president relationship ensures that board agendas are focused on the most significant strategic matters facing the institution. This partnership also reassures

the other board members that they are being fully informed about and can raise questions about matters of institutional importance as they consider both the institution's challenges and its opportunities. And, of course, such knowledge is essential for board members if they are to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities. It also goes without saying that when board members are appropriately informed, they are far more likely to support the president.

## TRUSTEESHIP: What is the most important challenge that higher education boards face today?

**STOEVER:** I think most of us would agree that the single most important issue that higher education institutions need to address is their financial sustainability. Many colleges and universities have for years been experiencing declining net tuition revenue, caused most notably by changes in the college-going population and by increasing tuition discounts. Many public institutions have seen a cut in state support. The pandemic has intensified these problems. It is now commonly understood that the business model for higher education is no longer sustainable. Therefore, redefining that model must become a high and immediate priority for institutional leaders and board members. This is another area where AGB can provide boards, presidents, and leadership teams with important expertise and resources.



## TRUSTEESHIP: Why are boards of trustees important not only to institutions but also to society at large?

**STOEVER:** Board members need to be focused on the long term so that their institutions can continue to fulfill their important missions and thrive over time. Higher

education is an incredibly important asset that contributes to the well-being of our country, our society, and our economy, not just in the United States but also around the world. Securing the future of these valuable institutions may in fact be the most critical trustee responsibility.

To ensure the long-term vitality of each institution, my colleagues at AGB and I believe that in addition to fulfilling their oversight function and thinking about strategic matters, trustees need to understand and focus on student success. They must encourage and support efforts to give students the knowledge, understanding, and tools that will enable them to fulfill their own personal and professional aspirations and become educated citizens.

## TRUSTEESHIP: What are AGB's priorities to help boards now and into the future?

**STOEVER:** AGB has three strategic priorities: (1) to advance higher education's focus on justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion; (2) to encourage boards to understand and adopt the tenets of our forthcoming book, the *Principles of Trusteeship*; and (3) to support boards, presidents, and their leadership teams as they undertake strategic transformation.

Justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential values that we at AGB believe



#### AGB's 2019 Foundation Forum in Orlando, Florida

every organization needs to embrace. On an institutional level, they should inform strategies, decisions, policies, and practices. On a personal level, they should create a feeling of belonging for every member of the campus community. Indeed, everyone who is part of a college, university, or foundation—whether a student, faculty member, or staff member—should feel welcome at their institution, should see themselves as part of the community and—it should go without saying—to be treated with dignity and respect. Our JDE&I initiative will include the *AGB Board of Directors' Statement on Justice, Equity, and Inclusion* to be published later this spring; a suite of new, practical tools and resources; and a new service from AGB Consulting on JDE&I. Importantly, these values will be treated as the thread that is woven through all the cloth we weave.

The Principles of Trusteeship initiative grew out of AGB's 100 years of focusing on strengthening governance of higher education boards and reaffirms our commitment to empowering board members to serve as strategic thought partners with their presidents and leadership teams. The Principles

of Trusteeship project is focused on helping individual board members learn about the critically important attributes and skills and perspectives that are required for individual board members to be effective board members. For example, we believe that this initiative will serve as a new, practical resource for board members that will inform board action. We hope that these principles will be central to all orientation sessions for new board members.

Strategic transformation inevitably will be a multifaceted and long-term endeavor. This area of focus emphasizes the need for board members to become genuinely engaged in their work. For example, trustees need to commit significant time to learning about their institution and about higher education and its challenges more broadly. They also need to leverage their expertise to help their institution thrive in the future. To help meet these needs, AGB Consulting is launching a new practice area on strategic transformation.

**TRUSTEESHIP: How would you describe AGB's impact and legacy?**

**STOEVER:** AGB's impact over 100 years of

strengthening higher education governance has, in great part, informed trustees about what they need to know, what they need to do, and how presidents and leadership teams should work effectively with their boards. Effective boards add more than just oversight. Our goal going forward is to continue to enable board members, in this new challenging environment, to be strategic assets for their institutions and with their leadership team members.

One of the things that I have learned over the last couple of years as the president of AGB is that volunteer board members serve in their roles because they have a higher calling. The countless number of board members with whom I've been privileged to talk are truly passionate about helping their colleges, universities, and foundations. Even as many board members are selected, appointed, or elected because of their philanthropic capacity, they also add great value because of their strategic insights and wisdom. Their higher calling, in my mind, is that board members aspire that their institution create dynamic and talented graduates who have the desire and capacity to be lifelong learners. For some institutions, it will be to seek to prepare students who will make a contribution to the world. For others, it will be to foster workforce readiness. In yet others, it will be to support significant research and to provide innovative opportunities for industry, government, and higher education itself to leverage into the future. In all cases, effective board members help their institutions fulfil their mission.

As we at AGB enter the next century of our organizational history, we look forward to continuing our important work together. ■



AGB thanks the Carnegie Corporation of New York for its support in recognition of AGB's 100th Anniversary.