

How many boards have terms for their members?

The vast majority (over than 90 percent) of governing boards of independent and public institutions indicated that they specify the length of a single term for board members.

LENGTH OF BOARD MEMBER TERM SPECIFIED

	NO	YES
PUBLIC	7.8%	92.2%
INDEPENDENT	3.6%	96.4%

What is the typical length of a single term?

The average length of a board member's term among public institutions is nearly six years. Among independent institutions, the average length is around three years.

AVERAGE BOARD MEMBER TERMS

	AVERAGE LENGTH OF TERM (YEARS)
PUBLIC	5.5
INDEPENDENT	3.2

How many boards limit the number of consecutive terms a member may serve?

Many boards limit the number of consecutive terms a board member may serve. Independent boards in each Carnegie classification are more likely to place limits on consecutive terms (average 74.4 percent) than public colleges, universities, and systems (average 52.2 percent).

BOARDS THAT HAVE POLICIES LIMITING CONSECUTIVE TERMS

	PUBLIC	INDEPENDENT
ASSOCIATE'S	0.0%	0.0%
BACCALAUREATE	69.2%	77.8%
MASTER'S	44.8%	65.4%
DOCTORAL/RESEARCH	67.6%	73.5%
SPECIALIZED	100.0%	87.2%
SYSTEM	35.3%	–
TOTAL AMONG ALL RESPONDENTS	52.2%	74.4%

Statistics Source: *Policies, Practices, and Composition of Governing Boards of Colleges, Universities, and Institutionally Related Foundation Boards 2021*, AGB 2021

What is the typical maximum number of terms?

Among those boards that limit the number of consecutive terms, the average number of terms was approximately two for public institutions and approximately three for independent institutions.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CONSECUTIVE TERMS

PUBLIC	2.2
INDEPENDENT	3.2

Source: *Policies, Practices, and Composition of Governing Boards of Colleges, Universities, and Institutionally Related Foundation Boards 2021*, AGB 2021

Related Resources

[Policies, Practices, and Composition of Governing Boards of Colleges, Universities, and Institutionally Related Foundation Boards](#)

AGB

This survey report and those that preceded it are intended to spark dialogue about the future of higher education governance, including board capacity and functionality. The report offers a comprehensive picture of independent, public, and institutionally affiliated foundation governing boards.

2021

[Transitioning, Engaging, and Celebrating Termed Board Members](#)

Lynnette M. Heard

When a member leaves, a board may be apprehensive about losing his or her professional expertise, institutional memory, philanthropic support, access to relationships, or boardroom camaraderie. This blog post sets out a three-part program designed to help boards keep former members effectively engaged in appropriate new roles.

2020 • AGB blog post

[Board Complacency and the Experienced President](#)

Steven C. Bahls

Early in their tenures, college and university presidents may feel that the leash of board oversight is too short. Later, as mid-career presidents, they may feel that their boards are not involved enough. This article examines board complacency and offers suggestions for “waking up” a board that has grown too comfortable with “best practices,” a “presumption of excellence,” and the steady hand of a highly competent president.

2011 • *Trusteeship* magazine article

[Updating Board Bylaws—and Beyond](#)

Robert M. O’Neil

How well do your bylaws serve your board? Do they seem to offer more opportunities for obstructionism than clear, useful guidance? This article makes recommendations for finding the right balance in bylaws between clarity, concision, and providing for a functional and productive institutional structure.

2013 • *Trusteeship* magazine article