

# Board Responsibilities Matrix Centering Equitable Student Success

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AGB Project on Equitable Student Success  
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# Strategic Goal

**Normalize and outline the board's role in maximizing equitable student success.**

“ ...[B]oards are uniquely positioned to advance change in ways that other institutional stakeholders cannot....they can illuminate the context, ensure attention to the issues, hold institutions accountable for progress, and contribute their resources, insight, and wisdom. ”

(Eckel & Trower, 2016)

# The Board Responsibilities Matrix

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- Provides examples of how the board can leverage its roles and responsibilities to bring about equitable student success
- Builds on the previously established core responsibilities of higher education governing boards\*
- Illustrates how equitable student success is an integral part of these core responsibilities
- Suggests ways to actualize equitable student success as part of the work of the board

[\\*Higher Education Governing Boards](#) (AGB, 2018)

- 1 Establishing, disseminating, and keeping current the **mission** of the institution
- 2 Selecting, supporting, and assessing the **chief executive** of the institution/system
- 3 Co-creating, approving, and monitoring the progress of the **strategic plan**
- 4 Ensuring the institution's **fiscal integrity**, preserving and protecting its assets for posterity, and engaging directly in fundraising and philanthropy
- 5 Ensuring the **quality of education** provided by the institution

## Board Roles and Responsibilities\*

- 6 Safeguarding both the **autonomy** of the institution and the related tradition of **academic freedom**
- 7 Ensuring that the **policies and processes** of the institution remain current and are properly implemented
- 8 Engaging regularly with the institution's major **constituencies**
- 9 Ensuring that the **board's business** is conducted in an exemplary fashion, that its governance policies and practices are kept current, and that the performance of the board, its committees, and its members are periodically assessed

\*[Higher Education Governing Boards](#) (AGB, 2018)

## Establishing, disseminating, and keeping current the mission of the institution

Overview	Action Items	Metrics & Ways of Assessing	What Success Looks Like	Questions to Pose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the key roles of the board is to guide the institution as it strives to maintain its mission.</li> <li>• Institutional missions provide an overview of the institution's goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using equity and student success as a guide, examine whether equitable student success is indicated as part of the mission, vision, and values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What key words in the mission are "equity-centered"?</li> <li>• Mission rubric</li> <li>• Institutional data</li> <li>• Check institutional values statements and vision statements.</li> <li>• Show ways and places that mission, vision, and values manifest equitable student success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission alignment with equitable student success goals</li> <li>• Equitable student success is embodied in the mission, vision, and strategic plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this mission fit where we are as an institution now?</li> <li>• How might the mission need to be adapted so that it aligns with where we are as an institution?</li> <li>• How can we ensure our mission is current in our vision and strategic plan?</li> <li>• How does our board demonstrate its commitment to achieving equitable student success?</li> </ul>

# Institutional Example

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## University of Louisville Mission and Vision Statement

### **Mission Statement**

The University of Louisville pursues excellence and inclusiveness in its work to educate and serve its community through:

1. teaching diverse undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in order to develop engaged citizens, leaders, and scholars;
2. practicing and applying research, scholarship, and creative activity; and
3. providing engaged service and outreach that improve the quality of life for local and global communities.

The University is committed to achieving preeminence as a premier anti-racist metropolitan research university.

### **Vision Statement**

The University of Louisville will be recognized as a great place to learn, a great place to work, and a great place in which to invest because we celebrate diversity, foster equity, and strive for inclusion.



## Selecting, supporting, and assessing the chief executive of the institution/system

Overview	Action Items	Metrics & Ways of Assessing	What Success Looks Like	Questions to Pose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arguably the most influential role that boards have is to select, support, and evaluate the institutional chief executive and/or system head.</li> <li>Boards can use this influence to elevate equitable student success as a leadership requisite.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate criteria for equitable student success (ESS) into the recruitment, selection, and evaluation factors for the chief executive.</li> <li>If your institution says equitable student success is a priority, evidence of ESS must be placed prominently in the recruitment and vetting process.</li> <li>The actions and progress of the chief executive should be monitored with the lens of equitable student success and compensation decisions should reflect achievement of related goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History of improved student success</li> <li>Ask questions centered on equitable student success in the candidate's interview.</li> <li>Equitable student success statement</li> <li>Candidate shows evidence of ESS in past work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidate can craft a definition of equitable student success.</li> <li>Candidate can convey a plan for equitable student success.</li> <li>Chief executive makes decisions with equitable student success in mind.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the ways you have worked to support equitable student success at your current or past institution?</li> <li>What are the ways in which different students require different resources for student success?</li> <li>How are those different resources provided?</li> <li>What goals and evidence of achievements regarding equitable student success does the board use in assessing the chief executive?</li> <li>Are incentives leading to greater equity and student success? If not, why not?</li> <li>Boards should ask questions based on their understanding of current positioning: Do we need a transformational or transactional leader?</li> </ul>



# Institutional Example

## Minnesota State

Sources:

- <https://www.minnstate.edu/system/chancellor/index.html>
- <https://www.minnstate.edu/Equity2030/index.html>



## Arizona Board of Regents

Example: CEO compensation dependent on achieving equity goals (at-risk compensation)

Sources:

- <https://www.azregents.edu/news-releases/abor-meeting-highlights-board-approves-presidents%E2%80%99-contracts-risk-goals-asu-and>
- [https://public.azregents.edu/News%20Clips%20Docs/Pres.\\_Crow\\_New\\_Goals.pdf](https://public.azregents.edu/News%20Clips%20Docs/Pres._Crow_New_Goals.pdf)
- [https://public.azregents.edu/News%20Clips%20Docs/Pres.\\_Cruz\\_New\\_Goals.pdf](https://public.azregents.edu/News%20Clips%20Docs/Pres._Cruz_New_Goals.pdf)



## Co-creating, approving, and monitoring the progress of the strategic plan

Overview	Action Items	Metrics & Ways of Assessing	What Success Looks Like	Questions to Pose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic plans are used to set priorities, focus attention and resources, and establish the institution's direction in response to a changing environment.</li> <li>• Plan should demonstrate full transparency from initiation to completion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure the strategic plan is up to date and reflects equity-centered goals.</li> <li>• Assure broad constituent engagement has been a part of the development process and review of the plan.</li> <li>• Conduct a fully involving environmental scan and situational assessment at the onset of plan development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review contents of the strategic plan.</li> <li>• Rubric/document analysis</li> <li>• Questions that tie strategic plan align to spoken goals</li> <li>• Assure spoken goals align with mission.</li> <li>• Assess plan plausibility and risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An up-to-date strategic plan reflects current (and anticipated) demographics and goals and has clearly stated outcome goals for equity.</li> <li>• Annual reports demonstrate progress toward goals.</li> <li>• Board aligns strategic plan goals with budget allocations and invests in equitable student success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When is the last time the strategic plan was updated?</li> <li>• How have our institution or student, staff, or faculty demographic groups changed?</li> <li>• What changes do we anticipate?</li> <li>• Does the plan articulate equity goals with metrics and milestones?</li> </ul>

# Institutional Example

## William Jewell College

Sources:

- <https://www.jewell.edu/about/mission-and-strategic-plan>



## Prairie View A&M and Texas A&M System Board of Regents

Example: Comprehensive strategic plan to address access and affordability

Sources:

[Governing Board Best Practices for College Affordability,  
https://www.pvamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/StrategicPlan\\_Web.pdf](https://www.pvamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/StrategicPlan_Web.pdf)



AGB

## Ensuring the institution's fiscal integrity, preserving and protecting its assets for posterity, and engaging directly in fundraising and philanthropy

Overview	Action Items	Metrics & Ways of Assessing	What Success Looks Like	Questions to Pose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boards must be good stewards of fiscal, reputational, and personnel assets as they work to operationalize strategic plans.</li> <li>The budget is the manifestation of the strategic plan.</li> <li>Investing in equitable student success has a high rate of return; equitable student success is good for the present and long-term stability of the institution and should not just be considered a moral imperative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align budget with equity goals.</li> <li>Invest in and approve spending that advances student success equitably</li> <li>Make every effort to retain all students (easier to retain than a current student than to recruit another student)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ability to recruit and retain a diverse student body that reflects changing demographics is closely tied to the financial well-being of an institution (Eckel &amp; Trower, 2016).</li> <li>Look at the budget over the years to see how resources have been used. The budget is the manifestation of the institution's strategic plan, mission, and values.</li> <li>Assess full funding support for equity-related matters in comparison with other needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since every stakeholder, program, and decision influences or is impacted by institutional finances, strong finances facilitate a strong future for the institution (ACCT, 2021).</li> <li>Budget decisions are informed by strategy to address student needs and promote success of all students.</li> <li>Budget decisions are informed by data about the results of efforts to enhance student success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How have we invested in student success this year? What is the cost of failed retention and graduation?</li> <li>How do our priorities for facility use and new construction reflect our values and support equitable student success?</li> <li>Have programs and initiatives geared toward advancing equity received needed funding and support?</li> <li>Are our fundraising and student success goals aligned?</li> <li>Where will additional resources have the greatest impact to achieve priority goals for equitable student success?</li> <li>What is an acceptable level of debt for our students? How can we reimagine the cost of attendance?</li> <li>What are the data on two-year transfer students? What will it take to improve their outcomes?</li> </ul>

# Institutional Example

## University of Central Florida

Example: Additional resources to raise retention and graduation of transfer students

Source: <https://www.ucf.edu/admissions/undergraduate/tuition-aid/>



## Saint Mary's College

Example: Every new equity and inclusion initiative receives funding or fundraising support from board and advancement.

Source: <https://www.saintmarys.edu/inclusion-and-equity>



## Ensuring the quality of education provided by the institution

Overview	Action Items	Metrics & Ways of Assessing	What Success Looks Like	Questions to Pose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boards must monitor and evaluate how effectively their institutions apply resources to support learning and student success.</li> <li>Boards must assure that curriculum and instructional programs are equity centered and culturally responsive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solicit data on student graduation outcomes, retention, time to degree, what happens after graduation, mobility, services they use on campus, climate, sense of belonging, and GPA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audits</li> <li>Accreditation</li> <li>Rankings from <i>U.S. News and World Report</i>, and other sources.</li> <li>Data by key demographic factors on measures of student success—how equitable is it?</li> <li>National and international subject matter tests</li> <li>Surveys</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Institutional data</li> <li>Disaggregated student satisfaction and employment in field surveys that demonstrate continued outcome equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The institution looks holistically at student experiences and outcomes during the time on campus and after graduation, qualitatively and quantitatively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do we mean by quality of education? Quality for whom and for what?  Which groups do not seem to be having quality-rich experiences on our campus?  What does success look like for graduates?</li> <li>How does the board advocate for the institution and interact with political leaders and funding bodies?</li> </ul>

# Institutional Example

## Xavier University of Louisiana

### Sources:

- <https://www.xula.edu>
- Ranked #4 in social mobility and top preparer of students for medical school



# Safeguarding both the autonomy of the institution and the related tradition of academic freedom

Overview	Action Items	Metrics & Ways of Assessing	What Success Looks Like	Questions to Pose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boards will stay at the level of governance and will not go "into the weeds" of management.</li> <li>Principles of tenure and academic freedom will remain key principles of the academy</li> <li>It is important to recognize the history and context of institutions; some have been complicit in race and sex discrimination and antithetical to institutional change</li> <li>Boards and their administrative teams must spend time understanding the conflict points between academic freedom and free speech on the one hand and equity and inclusion on the other</li> <li>Some institutions have been the perpetual victims of racism, including historic underfunding of public HBCUs, Tribal Colleges, and other Minority-Serving Institutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine whether the institution keeps data on the rate of tenure and promotion disaggregated by race and ethnicity and gender</li> <li>If no such data are kept, inquire how this information can be kept</li> <li>Enter dialogue with administration on determining and eliminating barriers to increasing faculty, staff, and leadership diversity</li> <li>Review policies and practices to ensure they support and protect academic freedom for students and faculty</li> <li>Educate the board on academic freedom principles and constitutional protections of free speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional data</li> <li>Climate survey</li> <li>Faculty survey</li> <li>Audit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same percentage of tenure and promotion for marginalized groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the board address external threats to its authority (e.g., how we teach American history)? What have been the threats to academic freedom on our campus?</li> <li>How can the board protect academic freedom, particularly of those that research and advocate for DEI issues?</li> <li>How can the board protect its students, faculty, and staff of color; build inclusive and supportive environments; and uphold the principles of academic freedom and free speech?</li> <li>For some institutions (e.g., HBCUs), protection of faculty from reprisal for speaking truth to power externally is important.</li> </ul>



# Institutional Example

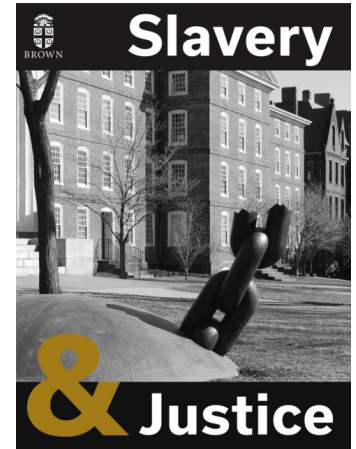
Examples: These institutions addressed their histories with slavery and committed to sharing information publicly.

## Sources:

The **University of Virginia** supports a consortium of over 90 institutions, [Universities Studying Slavery](#).

**Brown University** was one of the first institutions to examine and make public its history with slavery in this [report](#) and [website](#).

The **University of Cincinnati** shared its [history](#) and [board initiative](#) to change the name of one of the colleges from that of its founding donor, a slaveholder.



## Ensuring that the policies and processes of the institution remain current and are properly implemented

Overview	Action Items	Metrics & Ways of Assessing	What Success Looks Like	Questions to Pose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boards will use the fiduciary duties of care, loyalty, and obedience as guides that center the needs of the institution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a group of board members assess policies with an equity lens to identify those in need of updating.</li> <li>Troubleshoot policies and processes for their impact or effect on diverse constituencies in the institution as a part of the renewal process.</li> <li>Equity review of committee charters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policies</li> <li>Accountability</li> <li>Internal policy review</li> <li>External policy review</li> <li>Accountability review (Has the board been monitoring stakeholders to make sure policies and processes are properly implemented?)</li> <li>Monitor inequities and complaints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policies and procedures center on equity.</li> <li>Board committee charters center on equity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What does “properly implemented” look like?</li> <li>Who needs to be consulted when policies and procedures are updated?</li> <li>Who benefits from current policies on admissions, financial aid, and transfer?</li> </ul>

# Institutional Example

## University of Alaska

Example: The University of Alaska Board of Regents committed to addressing barriers to the success of Alaska Native students and set new reporting requirements and goals for the system head and institutions.

### Sources:

“The Board of Regents establishes understanding and addressing racial justice issues as a board priority. As a first step, the board authorizes and directs the university president to take the necessary actions to collect data; study and understand the university climate and programming; and identify the barriers, challenges and opportunities to improve participation and outcomes for Alaska Native and Indigenous students, faculty, and staff. . . . This motion is effective November 6, 2020.” Read the [full report](#).



## Engaging regularly with the institution's major constituencies

Overview	Action Items	Metrics & Ways of Assessing	What Success Looks Like	Questions to Pose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boards will be visible and accessible and responsive to students, staff, faculty, presidents, alumni, and the community in a fashion that aligns with their roles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with president to set key meetings.</li> <li>Solicit reports or regular updates and opportunities for conversation and social interaction at board meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agenda items</li> <li>Minutes</li> <li>Campus survey</li> <li>Board survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boards have a working knowledge of organizational chart and key players.</li> <li>Boards know who is accountable for what and to whom.</li> <li>Boards understand student needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What major constituencies require interaction with the board?</li> <li>Are CDOs, HR officers and others essential to equity in communication with boards?</li> <li>How do we learn about the experiences of current students?</li> </ul>

# Institutional Example

## William Jewell College

**Example:**

**Sources:**



## Virginia Commonwealth University

**Example:** The Virginia Commonwealth University Board of Visitors established a Committee on Commemorations and Memorials to conduct extensive listening sessions and examine and make recommendations regarding Confederate names and symbols on or adjacent to campus, then took action to decommission them.



**Sources:** <https://inclusive.vcu.edu/public-comment/>,  
<https://agb.org/trusteeship-article/extraordinary-board-leadership/>

## Ensuring that the board's business is conducted in an exemplary fashion, that its governance policies and practices are kept current, and that the performance of the board, its committees, and its members are periodically assessed

Overview	Action Items	Metrics & Ways of Assessing	What Success Looks Like	Questions to Pose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boards work to hold other groups accountable for equitable student success.</li> <li>Boards hold themselves responsible for equitable student success through appropriate trainings, consultation, policies, and composition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular assessment and reporting</li> <li>Proactive and not just reactive</li> <li>The board organizes committees and its work to effectively advance equitable student success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey responses</li> <li>Sense of belonging</li> <li>Familiarity with DEI</li> <li>Diversity of board members</li> <li>Knowledge of equitable student success issues</li> <li>Climate survey</li> <li>Board survey</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Questionnaires</li> <li>Annual goal-setting for the board and committees—and annual review of goal status</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board assessment happens on a regular basis.</li> <li>The board demonstrates internal and external progress in areas related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.</li> <li>Ongoing attention to and progress on equitable student success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How often should we assess the board?</li> <li>What do we do with the assessment data?</li> <li>With whom do we share the data?</li> <li>How does our data compare with the institution's data?</li> <li>What expertise and experience do we need on the board?</li> </ul>

# Institutional Example

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## Adler University

Example: The Adler University Board of Trustees committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals for student success and undertook changes to board composition, orientation, and ongoing training in DEI to address its own role in remedying structural racism.

Sources:

<https://agb.org/trusteeship-article/extraordinary-board-leadership/>

<https://www.adler.edu/2022/01/26/adler-university-board-of-trustees-named-recipient-of-2022-john-w-nason-award-for-board-leadership-by-association-of-governing-boards/>