

Higher Education Governance Integrity Initiative

A NONPARTISAN POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Public higher education governing boards are facing growing political pressure, increased public scrutiny, and rising uncertainty about governance roles and responsibilities.

Our nonpartisan initiative provides recommendations to strengthen governance effectiveness and help trustees govern with clarity, accountability, and appropriate boundaries. They can be incorporated through state legislation or policy adoption at the system or institution governing board level.

43%

of trustees are not fully confident in their own or their board's understanding of fiduciary responsibilities and governance boundaries.

- March 2026 AGB survey

FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

1

STRENGTHEN TRUSTEE SELECTION CRITERIA

Prioritize candidates with fiduciary, governance, and civic leadership experience to ensure boards are equipped to govern effectively.

2

MODERNIZE TRUSTEE TRAINING

Require comprehensive onboarding and continuing education focused on fiduciary duties, governance vs. management boundaries, institutional autonomy, and ethical leadership.

3

IMPLEMENT FIDUCIARY CERTIFICATION

Require trustees to formally affirm their commitment to institutional mission and values; duties of care, loyalty, and obedience; and core principles of trusteeship.

4

REFORM NOMINATION PROCESSES

Introduce structured legislative involvement to reduce politicization, preserve board continuity, and strengthen public confidence.

5

PREPARE BOARD CHAIRS FOR LEADERSHIP

Require role-specific training for board chairs, recognizing that governance breakdowns often originate at the leadership level.

WHY THIS MATTERS

When governance roles become unclear, institutional leadership stability, public trust, and mission stewardship are at risk.



PROTECTS INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY



UPHOLDS FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITY



REINFORCES ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE PUBLIC



SUPPORTS LONG TERM MISSION SUCCESS



PRESERVES ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FREE SPEECH

Learn more and access policy and governance resources:

AGB.org/Integrity

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