

MAKING ADVOCACY A PART OF YOUR BOARD'S CULTURE¹

The AGB Guardians Initiative seeks to harness the knowledge and passion of the nation's board members to create a cadre of informed, dedicated, and visible advocates for higher education. As corporate and community leaders, board members are uniquely positioned to communicate the value proposition of the colleges and universities they serve and to advocate higher education more broadly within their professional, social, and personal networks. Board members can also help advance their institutions' interests with policymakers at the state and federal levels.

With leadership from the CEO, board chair, and government relations liaison, board members can be leveraged to accelerate an institution's/system's advocacy strategy. Board members can be a valuable resource as third-party advocates, but board participation in advocacy requires partnership and respect of institutional policies and procedures. For example, board members should not develop their own agendas and engage elected officials without notice to the CEO or his or her designee.

Considerations for Boards

- Do we regularly discuss the implications of public policies (including funding) to our mission?
- Do we have an advocacy or public policy strategy for our organization?
- To whom should the board look for direction on public policy and strategy?
- Do we have board leaders who can speak to and connect with a broad cross-section of community needs and constituencies in support of the public policy strategy?
- Are we affiliated with coalitions and organizations that may help to advance our advocacy strategy?
- Should we provide training or guidance to board members about how to engage effectively in advocacy efforts to enable them to represent our mission and work with confidence?
- Does our board-recruitment strategy align with our public policy strategy and the connections or influence that will ensure our success?

Considerations for CEOs and Government Relations Liaisons

- Is the board well informed about how best to support and track the progress of our public policy strategy?
- Is the expertise and advocacy of board members strategically leveraged in key media outlets or other public venues?
- How do we engage board leaders who can speak to and connect with a broad cross-section of community needs and constituencies in support of our work?
- Do any board members have personal or professional connections to coalitions and organizations that are helping to advance our advocacy strategy?

¹ Adapted from: The Power of Board Advocacy: A Discussion Guide for Boards. *Stand for Your Mission*. www.standforyourmission.org