



Trustee Recruitment and Engagement at Small Private Liberal Arts Colleges

Strategies to Identify Prospective Board Members and
Communicate Expectations of Financial Contributions



Advancement Forum

Sam Rittenberg

Research Associate

John Tannous

Research Manager

LEGAL CAVEAT

The Advisory Board Company has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to members. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and The Advisory Board Company cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, The Advisory Board Company is not in the business of giving legal, medical, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, members should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given member's situation. Members are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, medical, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. Neither The Advisory Board Company nor its officers, directors, trustees, employees and agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by The Advisory Board Company or any of its employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation or graded ranking by The Advisory Board Company, or (c) failure of member and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

The Advisory Board is a registered trademark of The Advisory Board Company in the United States and other countries. Members are not permitted to use this trademark, or any other Advisory Board trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo, without the prior written consent of The Advisory Board Company. All other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of The Advisory Board Company and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by The Advisory Board Company. The Advisory Board Company is not affiliated with any such company.

IMPORTANT: Please read the following.

The Advisory Board Company has prepared this report for the exclusive use of its members. Each member acknowledges and agrees that this report and the information contained herein (collectively, the "Report") are confidential and proprietary to The Advisory Board Company. By accepting delivery of this Report, each member agrees to abide by the terms as stated herein, including the following:

1. The Advisory Board Company owns all right, title and interest in and to this Report. Except as stated herein, no right, license, permission or interest of any kind in this Report is intended to be given, transferred to or acquired by a member. Each member is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.
2. Each member shall not sell, license, or republish this Report. Each member shall not disseminate or permit the use of, and shall take reasonable precautions to prevent such dissemination or use of, this Report by (a) any of its employees and agents (except as stated below), or (b) any third party.
3. Each member may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or membership program of which this Report is a part, (b) require access to this Report in order to learn from the information described herein, and (c) agree not to disclose this Report to other employees or agents or any third party. Each member shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each member may make a limited number of copies, solely as adequate for use by its employees and agents in accordance with the terms herein.
4. Each member shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices, and other similar indicia herein.
5. Each member is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.
6. If a member is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such member shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to The Advisory Board Company.

Table of Contents

- 1) Executive Overview 4**
 - Key Observations 4
- 2) Trustee Identification and Recruitment 5**
 - Prospective Trustees 5
 - Recruitment Process 7
- 3) Trustee Financial Support and Engagement..... 11**
 - Financial Expectations..... 11
 - Annual Solicitation 12
 - Engagement and Evaluation..... 13
- 4) Research Methodology 16**
 - Project Challenge 16
 - Project Sources 16
 - Research Parameters..... 16

1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Contacts typically seek trustees with demonstrated institutional affinity, giving capacity, and professional backgrounds or skills that assist the board with oversight; they also prioritize gender, racial, and/or geographic diversity, as available. The Chief Advancement Officer (CAO) and president most often identify prospective trustees. Contacts also encourage current trustees to leverage their own professional and personal networks to identify individuals with potential interest in trusteeship; however, contacts caution that boards developed entirely from trustee connections may perpetuate overly-homogenous board composition. CAOs monitor alumni and donor lists to identify individuals with demonstrated institutional affinity and giving capacity; one institution researches any donor who contributes at least \$5,000 annually. Contacts also suggest families of current students and local businesses or prominent organizations as sources from which to identify prospective trustees.

Communicate expectations for financial contributions with transparency and candor during the trustee recruitment and cultivation process. The CAO, president, or a board officer meets with prospects to discuss trusteeship and financial expectations following an affirmative nomination from the board's trustee affairs committee. Board autonomy varies across institutions, but administrative leaders submit names to board subcommittees for formal consideration even at institutions with a culture of staff-directed board operations. The institutional contact tasked with recruitment conversations depends upon the particular prospect's institutional relationships. Contacts note that prospects appreciate straightforward expectations regarding financial contributions, but caution against implying that trusteeship is explicitly contingent upon financial contributions. At profiled institutions, most prospects are already institutional donors or high-wealth individuals with extensive philanthropic histories; contacts recommend against appointment of wealthy trustees without demonstrated institutional affinity in hopes they will begin to give regularly.

Contacts recommend that CAOs or other institutional stakeholders communicate an annual predetermined and quantifiable expected financial contribution. CAOs at some profiled institutions ask that trustees make the institution one of their top two philanthropic priorities; however, most contacts recommend that CAOs ask for a minimum contribution to the annual fund. Suggested annual fund contributions at profiled institutions range from \$10,000 to \$25,000 per year. In addition to unrestricted cash gifts to the annual fund, contacts also suggest that trustees increase their giving during capital campaigns and reunion years; one institution suggests that trustees contribute \$1 million over five years to a capital campaign during their tenure. Contacts seek 100 percent trustee participation in the annual fund each year and suggest that trustees contribute approximately 30 percent of the funds for a capital campaign. Contacts at profiled institutions rely on board officers or direct mail marketing to solicit annual contributions from fellow trustees. The CAO at one institution mails a pre-populated pledge form to trustees before the first board meeting of each year; board officers call any trustees who did not return a pledge before the meeting.

Regularly review, evaluate, and recognize trustee performance to foster institutional affinity and discourage complacency. Board trustee affairs committees or CAOs typically review trustee performance annually. Contacts recommend that trustees complete self-evaluations followed by meetings with a board officer or the CAO. Evaluations focus on meeting attendance, financial contributions, fundraising activities, professional services in-kind, and other institutional activities. Board officers discuss overall board performance and highlight outstanding individual achievements or gifts during regular board meetings.

2) Trustee Identification and Recruitment

Prospective Trustees

Amidst Unstable Revenues, Institutions More Financially Reliant than Ever on Private Support

Inconsistent endowment performance, declining tuition revenues, and other financial pressures lead administrators at many small, private liberal arts colleges to increase reliance on philanthropy. As the significance of trustee financial support and engagement increases, administrators seek to reevaluate and improve prospect identification and recruitment processes. Contacts at **Institution A** indicate greater reliance than ever on large gifts (they estimate that 94 percent of gifted monies now come from six percent of donors), which requires careful attention on identification and cultivation of trustees with capability to make significant financial contributions. At least one profiled institution recently increased the size of its governing board to generate more recognition opportunities for high giving capacity.

Contacts note that trustee giving has remained relatively steady despite challenging economic conditions since 2008, though some trustees momentarily paused contributions and some small-scale donors ceased annual giving. Contacts at **Institution B** indicate that some trustees and large donors changed the terms of their financial pledges to extend payout terms. Advancement officers reminded trustees and large donors that the institution relies on them for financial support more than ever in an unstable economy.

President and Chief Advancement Officer Most Frequently Identify Prospective Trustees from Existing Donor, Board, and Alumni Networks

At most profiled institutions, the President and Chief Advancement Officer (CAO) lead the effort to identify prospective trustees; they often also rely on current trustees to cultivate interest from their own personal and professional networks. In addition to personal, business, and community connections, alumni pools and donor lists provide networks from which senior administrators may identify prospects. Contacts at **Institution A** note increased efforts to target parents of current students as prospective trustees.



Heavy Recruitment from Trustee Networks May Lead to Homogeneity

Contacts at **Institution C** lament that a tradition of recruitment from existing trustee personal and professional networks has led to an overly homogenous board composition that lacks both diversity and giving capacity. In particular, they lack females and alumni from other geographic regions. To mitigate the homogeneity, the board's Governance Committee recently profiled the board's demographic composition (e.g., geographic location, occupation, giving capacity, race, gender) to better inform the trustee identification process.

Contacts suggest that board demographics should match the demographics of the older segments of the alumni base; a sufficient number of potential candidates likely do not exist to match the current student body's demographics.



Target the “Second-in-Command” at Local Corporations

High-level executives at businesses or other organizations in an institution’s surrounding area may be willing to serve as trustees; however, recruitment of these individuals for board service is likely competitive among local nonprofits, causes, and campaigns.

Instead, Robert Perry, President of R.H. Perry & Associates, a higher education-focused executive search firm, recommends targeting business or organization leaders who are one or several steps below the chief executive. These individuals will often have more time and attention than the CEO or President, but will possess similar skillsets and expertise; moreover, these deputies are newer to the rarified attention paid to senior executives and more flattered by requests for institutional affiliation. As they move higher in their organization, their giving capacity and influence will grow as their board tenure increases and their institutional affinity deepens.

Key Criteria Include Affinity, Giving Capacity, and Diversity

Prospective trustees across profiled institutions often include major donors and active volunteers. CAOs and board officers seek trustees who exhibit institutional affinity and engagement prior to the recruitment process; contacts at **Institution E** cite commitment to the institution and work ethic as two of the most important criteria. Contacts seek trustees with financial means to support the institution’s advancement goals and suggest that CAOs and board officers target individuals with demonstrated institutional engagement and philanthropic history. Contacts monitor institutional giving to identify potential trustees; the CAO at **Institution B** investigates any donor who consistently gives at least \$5,000 per year, especially new donors giving at that level or above. Trustees must not only exhibit the financial capacity to support the institution, but also a willingness or inclination to do so. CAOs should avoid attempts to convert trustees to new donors; rather, seek trustees with demonstrated institutional affinity and philanthropic history.

Contacts also seek trustees who balance or contribute to the board’s diversity, including professional background, age, geographic location, race, and gender. The CAO at **Institution A** relies on the composition of the Board’s Committee on Trusteeship as a reference.



Consider Skill-Based Searches to Identify Prospects with Desired Competencies

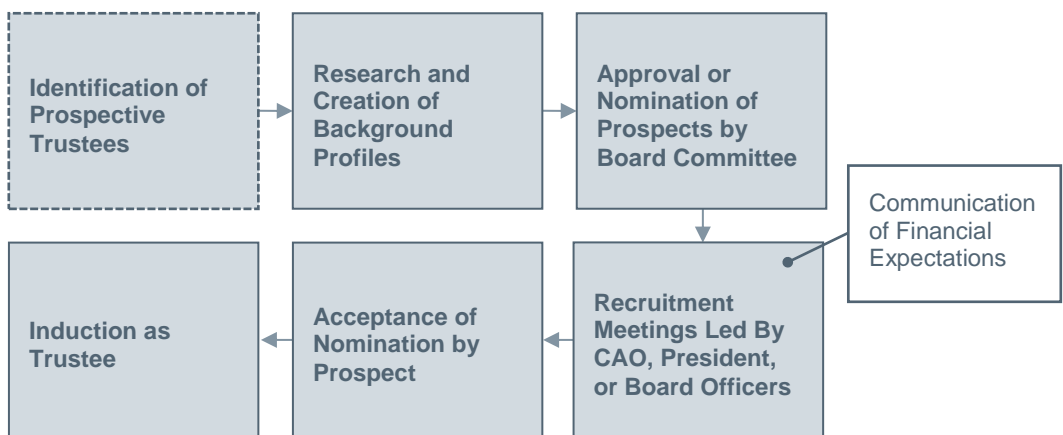
Higher education executive search professional Robert Perry recommends that administrators employ skill-based searches to fill competency gaps on the governing board. Trustees not only provide financial support to institutions, but also offer professional expertise and in-kind services in a variety of functional areas; administrators can evaluate board composition to determine which skillsets are represented and which are not. Boards typically maintain a subcommittee for each major component of the institution; Perry recommends mapping potential trustee expertise and experience to each subcommittee to ensure that the board has sufficient knowledge and skills (e.g., lawyers, real estate developers, doctors, academics, or businesspeople serve on subcommittees most relevant to their skillsets). Perry suggests the alumni pool as a viable source to find individuals who match the board’s skill-gaps.

Recruitment Process

Advancement and Board Officers Rank and Prioritize Prospective Trustees

CAOs or board officers create lists of prospective trustees, often referred to as a “pipeline.” Prospective trustee lists across institutions typically range from 20 to 30 names at any time. CAOs seek to maintain constant positive relationships with all names in the pipeline through occasional meetings, event invitations, and frequent communications.

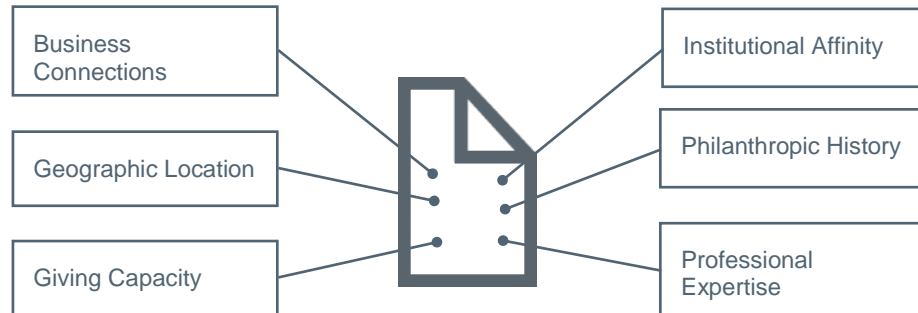
Trustee Identification and Recruitment Process



Advancement or Development Staff Create Background Profiles of Prospective Trustees

Development researchers typically create summary profiles of each prospective trustee to highlight a candidate's personal, professional, and financial information. Prospective trustee profiles resemble profiles of high-end fundraisers or major donor prospects. Contacts rely on several web-based resources to collect information on prospective trustees, including Wealth Engine, Lexis Nexis, Banner, and Google.

Sample Elements of Prospect Profiles



Board Committees Approve Prospects Prior to Recruitment Process

Board committees with trustee nomination oversight (e.g., governance subcommittee, trustee affairs committee) typically review prospect lists and profiles to approve candidates before administrators or board officers meet with prospects to discuss trusteeship. Contacts note that while CAOs often play a significant role in the identification of prospects, ultimate nominating authority rests with the board.

Nominating committees meet during regularly scheduled board meetings to approve prospects, but contacts note that committees may also meet on an ad-hoc basis when required; contacts at **Institution E** note that the nominating committee will approve prospects via telephone conferences. The board's Nominating Committee at **Institution B** meets three times to consider and elect new trustees; however, contacts regularly seek the committee's permission to hold "pre-meetings" or "pre-conversations" with prospective trustees to gauge and cultivate interest prior to an official vote. Conversations about prospective trustees and nominations are typically confidential to trustee affairs committees, which may include the President and CAO in an *ex-officio* capacity.



Senior Administrators May Guide Board Nominating Committees

At **Institution C**, trustees and administrators nominate prospective trustees by December 31 of each year. The CAO meets with the President and the President's Chief of Staff to identify four or five nominees that best suit the institution's needs. These administrators then meet with the chair of the board's Governance Committee to discuss the merits of each nomination, emphasizing their previously-discussed high priority prospects.

President, CAO, or Board Officers Lead Face-to-Face Recruitment Meetings to Cultivate Relationships with Prospects

Contacts typically do not inform prospective trustees of their candidate status until the board nominating committee grants approval. Once the committee affirmatively nominates a prospect, the CAO, President, or a board officer (based on the nature of the individual's connection to the institution or existing board members) establishes and cultivates a relationship with the nominee to gauge interest in trusteeship. Contacts across all profiled institutions recommend that meetings to discuss trusteeship take place in person; most meetings occur in candidates' homes or places of business where they are most comfortable.

Contacts indicate that the transition from pure prospect to inducted trustee often requires two to three years of relationship building. Upon nomination, prospects may not be able to immediately commit to joining the board due to previous obligations or commitments. Furthermore, institutional stakeholders require sufficient time to adequately acquaint themselves with prospects.



Contacts Do Not Heavily Rely on Software Tools to Monitor and Track Recruitment Efforts

Contacts at most profiled institutions do not employ significant software resources to monitor and track trustee recruitment. CAOs suggest existing development databases, information systems (e.g., Banner, PeopleSoft), and standard filing protocols.

Creative Strategies for Trustee Recruitment

Offer Interim Trusteeships

Institutions that need expedited professional services may consider interim trusteeships, which target business professionals with management experience to serve as a “turnaround expert” and assist or advise institutional leadership on issues of critical strategic need. These positions fill empty trustee seats for 12 to 18 months, which is long enough to effectively achieve change but short enough to mitigate commitment. While contacts praise interim trustees more for the in-kind value of their services than for personal financial contributions, the intensive experience may promote lifelong engagement or affinity with the institution. Interim trusteeships allow prospects to pilot the experience of serving on the board, which may ease their decision to accept a full term.

Develop Affinity through Invitational Engagements

Solicit potential trustees to participate in one-time speaking engagements to the Board for an event related to their area of expertise (e.g., ask a financial services professional to speak on effective management of a large endowment). This facilitates networking and establishes a connection between the prospect and the institution. After the engagement, the President, board chairman, and/or others may invite the speaker to lunch and a tour of the campus. This constitutes an excellent initial first step to determine if an individual is compatible with the rest of the board’s personalities and is seeking opportunities to become more involved.

Develop Trustee Pipeline through Lower Boards

While trusteeship may appear an overwhelming commitment for some prospects, institutions maintain many other voluntary boards (e.g., foundation boards, oversight boards to student affairs divisions or large colleges, president or other senior leaders’ personal advisory committees). Solicit potential trustees to serve on lower boards to facilitate development of institutional affinity and interest in trusteeship. This method serves as a test-period for both the potential trustee and the institution. Some progressive institutions develop graduated tiers of boards throughout the institution, each with varying stages of magnitude and clarity of financial commitment, which slowly onboards younger trustees to greater levels of oversight responsibility and personal giving expectations. Individuals’ giving capacity grows with the institution over time as they are periodically asked to serve on higher-level boards.

Administrators at **Institution B** created the President’s Advisory Council, a volunteer advisory board that meets twice per year. This lower board allows for increased opportunities to bring more individuals in closer association with the institution prior to consideration for a trustee position. Since implementing the board four years ago, two members have moved on to become trustees.

3) Trustee Financial Support and Engagement

Financial Expectations

“One prospect said to me, ‘It’s like a country club membership; just tell me what it costs.’”
 -Forum Interview

Communicate Financial Expectations during Recruitment Meetings

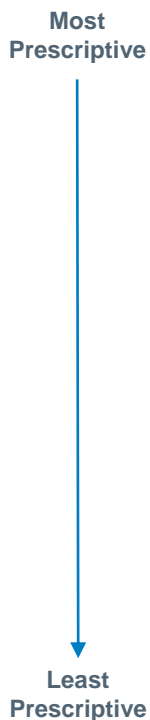
Across profiled institutions, contacts strongly recommend transparent and candid communication of expected financial contributions for both prospective and current trustees. Initial conversations about expected financial contributions should occur during face-to-face trustee recruitment meetings in a comfortable setting (e.g., the prospect’s home or place of work). Most prospects understand that administrators rely on trustees for philanthropic support and desire forthright communication of expectations; contacts at **Institution B** note that prospective trustees often inquire about expected contributions themselves.

While administrators seek trustees with financial means to support institutional fundraising goals, they stress that trusteeship is not *quid pro quo* with a financial contribution. Although discussions regarding trustee nomination and philanthropy may occur in the same conversation, contacts recommend avoiding any implication that board seats are contingent upon financial contributions. For example, they may discuss financial contributions alongside other expectations, such as meeting attendance and committee involvement. Some chief advancement officers explain that trustee giving constitutes role-modeling behavior to the alumni and donor community that signals confidence in the institution’s leaders and its ability to achieve its goals.

Financial Expectations Range from Exact Dollar Amounts to Relative Philanthropic Priority

The CAO, President, or board officers at three of five profiled institutions communicate a quantified annual financial expectation to trustees.

Expectations for Trustee Annual Financial Contributions



Institution	Financial Expectation
Institution A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least \$25,000 per year contribution to the annual fund by third year of trusteeship Capacity to contribute at least \$1 million over five years to a capital campaign
Institution B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least \$10,000 annual contribution
Institution D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailored, quantified expectation based on trustee’s giving capacity and philanthropic history, and giving trends of similar peers The CAO formerly encouraged trustees to consider the institution a top philanthropic priority; contacts transitioned to suggest a quantified expectation, citing increased efficacy
Institution C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees are encouraged to contribute to the institution as their first or second philanthropic priority
Institution E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees are encouraged to contribute to the institution as their first or second philanthropic priority

In lieu of trusteeship, contacts ask prospective trustees who lack sufficient giving capacity to join a group of associate donors committed to giving at least \$1,000 per year.

The CAO at **Institution C** recalls that at a previous liberal arts college where he was employed, the board chair annually reminded trustees of a minimum \$10,000 contribution per year, but that this practice would not comport with the independent culture of the board of his current institution.



Leverage Capital Campaigns and Reunion Years to Target Increased Financial Contributions

Contacts recommend increasing suggested financial contributions when a trustee is in a significant reunion year or during a capital campaign. Reunion years allow CAOs to take advantage of a trustee’s nostalgia and institutional affinity, while capital campaigns encourage new donors to support clearly identified fundraising goals.

Annual Solicitation

Contacts Prioritize Unrestricted Cash Gifts to Annual Funds

CAOs at profiled institutions note the importance of annual fund contributions; unrestricted cash gifts to annual funds allow administrators to allocate charitable donations in accordance with the institution’s most immediate or pressing priorities. While most institutions do not feature explicit goals regarding allocation of trustee giving, contacts at all profiled institutions expect 100 percent trustee participation in the annual fund.

Examples of Institutional Giving

More Frequent

Less Frequent



Annual Fund Contributions

The Board of Trustees at **Institution D** contributes over \$1 million per year to an annual fund of \$5.5 million, or roughly 20 percent of the total fund. The most generous annual gift is \$150,000, while “young alumni” Board members may give only \$100.



Capital Campaign Contributions

The CAO at **Institution A** seeks trustees to support 35 to 40 percent of a capital campaign through cash gifts (not including in-kind services, stock donations, etc.).



Major Gifts or “Pet Projects”

The CAO at **Institution B** emphasizes the need for gifts to the annual fund yet encourages trustees to give in accordance with their priorities or interests, which may come in the form of major gifts targeted to specific institutional projects.

Solicit Trustee Financial Contributions Annually

CAOs or board officers typically solicit annual financial contributions from the board. Several contacts rely on administrative database software (e.g., Banner) to track and monitor solicitation attempts and giving history.

Strategies to Solicit Annual Trustee Financial Contributions

Task Board Chair with Direct Ask

Contacts at **Institution C** recommends that because of the peer-based nature of a board of trustees, annual solicitations should come from a fellow trustee or the board chairman. Across profiled institutions, contacts note that peer-to-peer solicitations are often more fruitful than those from institutional administrators.

Employ Standard Alumni Solicitation Protocols

Institution B has not developed a protocol for annual solicitation that is unique to trustees; trustees receive the same direct mail solicitation as all other alumni. Contacts have considered a unique trustee annual solicitation, but found no reason for implementing such a measure. Contacts note that a unique trustee monetary solicitation may blind trustees to the standard solicitation process.

Mail Pre-Populated Pledge Forms

The advancement staff at **Institution D** sends a letter to each trustee before the year's first Board meeting that includes a pledge form, pre-populated with the requested amount. If trustees do not return a pledge by the first Board meeting, a fellow trustee on the Advancement Committee or the CAO will follow up with a phone call.

Assign Major Gift Officers to Each Trustee

The CAO at **Institution D** assigns a major gift officer to each trustee based on geographic location; however, the CAO serves as the main liaison between trustees and the institution. Contacts note that the president typically solicits all gifts over \$1 million.

At **Institution D**, the Advancement Committee of the Board sets the annual aggregate goal for trustee participation in the annual fund. The Advancement department, however, sets the annual targets for each trustee.

Engagement and Evaluation

Foster Trustee Engagement through Committee Memberships and Interest-Based Giving

Contacts at several profiled institutions note that institutional reliance on and respect for board committee oversight fosters trustee engagement. Trustee affairs committees seek to place trustees on committees tailored to personal interests and skillsets to drive competency and retain trustee attention. New trustees at **Institution B** are always placed on the Academic Affairs Committee to better understand how the institution operates in addition to a second committee of interest. New trustees at **Institution B** and **Institution E** also participate in an orientation session on institutional and board operations; they may meet with the senior administrator who staffs each committee to discuss its issue portfolio and committee-specific operations.

"I recommend asking, 'If money were no object, what would you do to transform the college?'"

-Forum Interview

CAOs also seek to leverage trustees' personal priorities to increase financial contributions and foster engagement through "pet projects." The CAO at **Institution A** works with trustees to identify their personal goals for the institution and develop a philanthropy plan to achieve them. While altruistic motives have traditionally driven trustees to donate funds to college priorities as institutional leaders define them, some board members increasingly regard targeted gift-giving as an opportunity to enhance a particular function or goal of the college that interests them. These donors consider their contribution an investment for which they expect frequent accountability and stewardship reporting, including fund disbursement and demonstrable results.



Increase Trustee Engagement with Personalized Contact

Every third year, the CAO of **Institution B** visits with each trustee separately to discuss their aspirations and concerns related to trusteeship. The CAO meets with 36 trustees over a period of four to five months. Contacts note that these “listening tours” offer trustees an outlet for their concerns and ideas, and serve to increase their institutional affinity.

Regularly Evaluate Trustee Giving and Engagement

Contacts recommend that boards incorporate an evaluative process to monitor trustee engagement and hold trustees accountable to their commitments. At some institutions, such as **Institution C**, the CAO meets with trustees on an annual basis to discuss board performance, including philanthropy, meeting attendance, and other institutional activities. However, oversight of trustee evaluation most often rests with an institution’s trustee affairs committee. The committee reviews trustee performance annually or after each term; the trustee evaluation process at **Institution E** features a mid-term and end-of-term review. The board’s Nominating Committee at **Institution B** meets before each regularly scheduled board meeting to discuss trustee performance and engagement. This practice allows committee members to watch for identified trends regarding individual or group behavior during upcoming board meetings and address them accordingly.

Contacts recommend that trustee performance reviews include a self-evaluation to ask trustees to think critically about their contributions to the board. The Committee on Trusteeship at **Institution A** compares trustee-completed self-reviews with a fact sheet that includes meeting attendance, philanthropic history, and institutional involvement.



Trustee Report Cards May Increase Engagement¹

A 2007 article in the *The Chronicle of Higher Education* discusses Pitzer College’s adoption of a trustee report card. Trustee report cards list each trustee’s committee and meeting attendance, institutional giving (e.g., annual fund, endowment, capital campaign), and institutional activities (e.g., annual-fund calls, special events, fundraising or networking events).

The Board’s Trustee Composition and Procedures Committee sends draft report cards to trustees to verify accuracy. One committee member contacts trustees nearing the end of their terms who have not met expectations in one or more areas to identify strategies to improve performance. The institution’s president notes that the report card drastically increased awareness of expectations and transparency surrounding trustee performance.

1) Trombley L, “Building a Better Trustee,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 53, no. 36 (2007): B20

Consider Term Limits to Increase Board Efficacy

The absence of trustee term limits may result in overly-homogenous boards that lack desired giving capacity. Boards without term limits tend to retain trustees for periods of long tenure with limited emphasis on overall and individual trustee performance and engagement. Contacts suggest that the expectation of indefinite trusteeship fosters a sense of complacency amongst trustees; it also makes it difficult to raise expectations of financial giving over generations as some alumni may have served multiple terms on the board and are acclimated to existing standards. While trustees at **Institution C** and **Institution E** do not have term limits, trustees may not seek renewal after reaching 70 and 75 years of age, respectively. Contacts at **Institution C** note that the (recently-implemented) age limit will require at least one-third of current board members to step down in the next three years.

Trustee Term Limits at Profiled Institutions²

Institution	Term Length	Term Limit	Evaluation
Institution A	3 year terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 consecutive terms 	Formal review after each term
Institution B	6 year terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 	Formal review after each term
Institution C	4 year terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None ▪ Trustees may not begin a new term after reaching 70 years of age 	Annual informal review
Institution D	3 year terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 	Formal review after each term
Institution E	4 year terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None ▪ Trustees may not begin a new term after reaching 75 years of age 	Formal mid-term and end of term review

2) Does not include nontraditional trustees, such as “Young Alumni” trustees.

4) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- How do administrators identify prospective trustees? What criteria do they use to evaluate prospective trustees (e.g., ability to give, institutional affinity) and what is the relative weight or significance of these criteria?
- What are the standard expectations for annual financial contributions of trustees? What language do contacts offer to describe these obligations?
- How are these expectations communicated during the recruitment and/or onboarding process for new trustees? Through what channel do administrators communicate expectations of financial support to prospective and current trustees?
- What metrics do institutional staff track to evaluate trustee engagement and giving (e.g., participation in annual giving, proportion of all large gifts from trustee giving)?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- Advisory Board's internal and online research libraries (eab.com)
- The Chronicle of Higher Education (<http://chronicle.com>)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://nces.ed.gov/>)
- Research conversation with Robert Perry, President of R.H. Perry & Associates, a higher education executive search firm

Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed four Chief Advancement Officers and one board officer at small, private liberal arts colleges.

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Approximate Institutional Enrollment (Undergraduate/Total)	Classification
Institution A	Midwest	1,400 (all undergraduate)	Baccalaureate Colleges – Arts & Sciences
Institution B	South	1,300 (all undergraduate)	Baccalaureate Colleges – Arts & Sciences
Institution C	West	2,000/2,020	Baccalaureate Colleges – Arts & Sciences
Institution D	Midwest	2,300 (all undergraduate)	Baccalaureate Colleges – Arts & Sciences
Institution E	Mid-Atlantic	2,400 (all undergraduate)	Baccalaureate Colleges – Arts & Sciences