



EAB

# Structuring the President/Headmaster Emeritus Role

---

Lessons from Institutions of Higher Education

Independent School Executive Forum

# Independent School Executive Forum

**Teresa Liu**

*Senior Research Associate*

**Luke Churchill**

*Research Manager*

## Legal Caveat

EAB Global, Inc. ("EAB") has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to partners. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and EAB cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, neither EAB nor any of its affiliates (each, an "EAB Organization") is in the business of giving legal, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, partners 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 partner's situation. Partners are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. No EAB Organization or any of its respective officers, directors, employees, or agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by any EAB Organization, or any of their respective employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation by any EAB Organization, or (c) failure of partner and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

EAB is a registered trademark of EAB Global, Inc. in the United States and other countries. Partners are not permitted to use these trademarks, or any other trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo of any EAB Organization without prior written consent of EAB. 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 an EAB Organization and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by an EAB Organization. No EAB Organization is affiliated with any such company.

### **IMPORTANT: Please read the following.**

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

1. All right, title, and interest in and to this Report is owned by an EAB Organization. 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 partner. Each partner is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.
2. Each partner shall not sell, license, republish, distribute, or post online or otherwise this Report, in part or in whole. Each partner 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 partner may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or 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 partner shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each partner 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 partner shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices, and/or other similar indicia herein.
5. Each partner is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.
6. If a partner is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such partner shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to EAB.

# Table of Contents

---

<b>1) Executive Overview .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Key Observations .....	4
<b>2) Responsibilities .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Purpose of Emeritus Status .....	5
Overview of Models .....	6
Honorific Status Model .....	7
Advisory Support Model .....	10
Transitioning Donor Relations .....	13
<b>3) Policy Design .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Policy Motivation .....	15
Eligibility and Benefits .....	15
Administrative Authority .....	18
<b>4) Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Project Challenges .....	20
Project Sources .....	20
Research Parameters .....	21

# 1) Executive Overview

---

## Key Observations

**The president emeritus title honors former presidents' distinguished, long-term service to an institution.** Based on publicly available president emeritus policies at multiple institutions of higher education, administrators grant president emeritus status to former presidents to recognize their extraordinary service to the institution.<sup>1</sup> At Institution C, outgoing presidents eligible for emeritus status must have served for at least 10 years at the university and must remain in "good standing" with the board of trustees when they retire or resign.<sup>2</sup>

**Presidents emeriti at profiled institutions contribute varying degrees of support to the current administration.** Presidents emeriti under the honorific status model—in use at Institution B—neither work directly with the current administration nor engage in campus events and activities. However, presidents emeriti may provide informal advice or encouragement to the current administration when requested. In addition, they receive special benefits, including use of the president emeritus title and access to university resources (e.g., business office). Presidents emeriti under the advisory support model—in use at Institution C—receive the same benefits and honors, but spend more time working toward institutional priorities, meet more frequently with current presidents, and provide more concrete (i.e., project-based) support.

**Establish a clear demarcation between new presidents and presidents emeriti to mitigate potential stakeholder confusion over institutional leadership.** Since presidents emeriti continue to conduct institutional business under the advisory support model, the board of trustees, faculty, and staff may continue to approach presidents emeriti for strategic guidance and decision support. These indirect interactions can undermine new presidents' authority. To avoid this pitfall, contacts at Institution A and Institution C recommend that the board grant a sabbatical year to presidents emeriti to ensure that new presidents can set an institutional agenda without interference. In addition, presidents emeriti should avoid involvement in campus politics.

**Regardless of an institution's president emeritus model, outgoing presidents should facilitate the transition of donor relations.** Since outgoing presidents worthy of emeritus status provided distinguished service to the institution for a substantial period, they possess close relationships with high-priority donors. Outgoing presidents should use these relationships to facilitate donor relationships with incoming presidents. At Institution A, the outgoing and incoming presidents co-hosted donor events. In addition, the outgoing and incoming presidents conducted joint visits with individual donors to discuss how the incoming president could steward the donor's relationship to the institution. Contacts at Institution A emphasize that administrators should avoid tasking presidents emeriti to manage specific donor relationships—this approach may complicate donor allegiance to current presidents and negatively impact donor perceptions of current presidents' leadership.

1) "President Emeritus Policy," Institution B, accessed March 10, 2020; Article profiling Institution C's president emeritus policy; "Emeritus Designation Policy," Baltimore City Community College, accessed March 10, 2020, [https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus\\_Designation\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus_Designation_Policy.pdf); "President Emeritus Policy," Goucher College, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://www.goucher.edu/policies/documents/President-Emeritus-Policy.pdf>; "President Emeritus Policy," University of Dayton, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://udayton.edu/policies/mission/President%20Emeritus%20Policy.php>.

2) "President Emeritus Policy," Institution C, accessed March 10, 2020; Article profiling Institution C's president emeritus policy.

## 2) Responsibilities

### Purpose of Emeritus Status

#### President Emeritus Status Connotes Distinguished, Long-Term Service to an Institution

Based on publicly available president emeritus policies at multiple institutions of higher education—Baltimore City Community College\*, Goucher College\*, Institution B, Institution C, and the University of Dayton\*—administrators use the president emeritus status to recognize former presidents’ extraordinary service to the institution.<sup>3</sup> For example, Institution B’s president emeritus policy explicitly states, “the title of president emeritus may be awarded to a president who has provided distinguished service through accomplishments, length of service, and evidence of advancing the mission of Institution B to the benefit of its students, staff, and faculty and the state.”<sup>4</sup> Contacts at Institution B suggest example metrics of distinguished service: the number of new buildings the president constructed, academic programs the president launched, honorary chairs the president created, and amount of money the president raised during their tenure.

President emeritus policies generally focus on the purpose of the president emeritus role, criteria for selection, nomination and approval processes, and benefits conferred alongside the title. The policies do not explicitly outline the responsibilities of presidents emeriti<sup>5</sup>—incoming presidents typically work directly with presidents emeriti to determine these responsibilities, if any.

This report profiles the responsibilities of presidents emeriti at three institutions.



#### University President Emeritus Insights Can Transfer to Headmaster Emeritus Role at Independent Schools

Independent schools with headmasters emeriti do not publish publicly available, formal policies—which implies that the headmaster emeritus role may be less defined or less common at independent schools. However, insights gathered from interviews with university presidents emeriti should transfer to the structure of the headmaster emeritus role. Presidents and headmasters both report to a board, handle advancement responsibilities (e.g., institutional fundraising), and contribute to the institution’s strategic vision.

\*Institutions profiled through secondary research

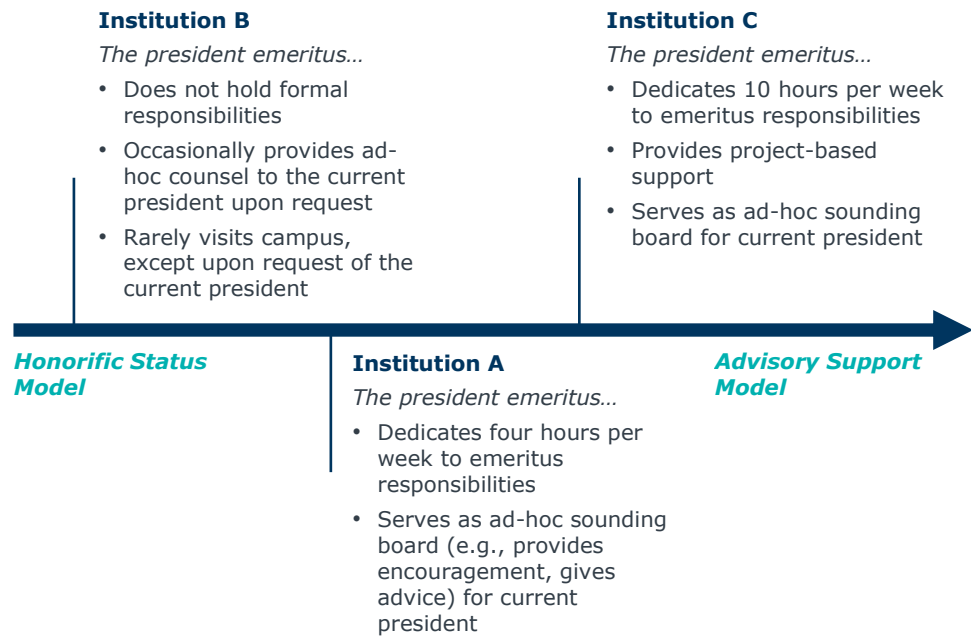
- 3) “President Emeritus Policy,” Institution B, accessed March 10, 2020; Article profiling Institution C’s president emeritus policy; “Emeritus Designation Policy,” Baltimore City Community College, accessed March 10, 2020, [https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus\\_Designation\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus_Designation_Policy.pdf); “President Emeritus Policy,” Goucher College, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://www.goucher.edu/policies/documents/President-Emeritus-Policy.pdf>;
- 4) “President Emeritus Policy,” University of Dayton, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://udayton.edu/policies/mission/President%20Emeritus%20Policy.php>;
- 5) “President Emeritus Policy,” Institution B, accessed March 10, 2020.
- 5) “President Emeritus Policy,” Institution B, accessed March 10, 2020; Article profiling Institution C’s president emeritus policy; “Emeritus Designation Policy,” Baltimore City Community College, accessed March 10, 2020, [https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus\\_Designation\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus_Designation_Policy.pdf); “President Emeritus Policy,” Goucher College, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://www.goucher.edu/policies/documents/President-Emeritus-Policy.pdf>;
- “President Emeritus Policy,” University of Dayton, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://udayton.edu/policies/mission/President%20Emeritus%20Policy.php>.

## Overview of Models

### Presidents Emeriti at Profiled Institutions Provide Varying Degrees of Support to Current Presidents

For the purposes of this report, president emeritus responsibilities fall on a spectrum from the *honorific status model* to the *advisory support model*. Under the honorific status model—in use at Institution B—presidents emeriti hold the honorific emeritus title without any responsibility to engage with or support the institution beyond providing ad-hoc advice upon request. The advisory support model represents an extension of the honorific status model. Under this model, presidents emeriti receive the same benefits and honors associated with the honorific status model. In addition, presidents emeriti assume increased responsibility to conduct institutional business at the request of current presidents.

### Overview of the President Emeritus Role at Profiled Institutions



Under the advisory support model, presidents emeriti spend more time working towards the priorities of the institution, meet more frequently with current presidents, and provide more concrete (i.e., project-based) support. For example, the president emeritus at Institution A allocates approximately four hours each week to emeritus responsibilities, while the president emeritus at Institution C dedicates approximately 10 hours per week to emeritus responsibilities. Presidents emeriti at both Institution A and Institution C currently serve as active faculty members at their respective institutions—thus, they spend the remainder of their time on faculty responsibilities.

## Honorific Status Model

### **Presidents Emeriti under the Honorific Status Model Hold No Formal Responsibility to Support the Institution**

Under the honorific status model, the president emeritus status primarily represents an honorific title—an acknowledgement that the individual is an integral part of the institution’s history and success. Presidents emeriti serve as an example of “the highest standards of personal and professional integrity, civic responsibilities, vision, and leadership” for administrators and presidents who follow them.<sup>6</sup> Contacts at Institution B—which employs the honorific status model—emphasize that the title itself does not confer specific duties. Under the honorific status model, presidents emeriti neither directly engage with the current administration nor with campus events and activities.

### **Presidents Emeriti Receive Special Benefits in Honor of Their Service to the Institution**

To acknowledge multiple years of honorable and distinguished service to the institution, administrators at all profiled institutions offer special benefits to presidents emeriti.

6) “President Emeritus Policy,” Goucher College, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://www.goucher.edu/policies/documents/President-Emeritus-Policy.pdf>.

## Benefits of President Emeritus Status at Profiled Institutions<sup>7</sup>



### Use of the president emeritus title

- At Goucher College\*, Institution B, and the University of Dayton\*, presidents emeriti receive a resolution naming and honoring them as presidents emeriti, a listing on the university website, and permission to use the title “president emeritus” in community and professional activities.
- At Institution B and Institution C, the president emeritus title represents a lifelong appointment. President emeritus policies at Baltimore City Community College\*, Goucher College\*, and the University of Dayton\* do not specify length of appointment.



### Participation in university functions, events, and boards at the discretion of the current president

- At Institution B, upon invitation by current presidents, presidents emeriti may participate in commencement exercises. At Institution A, Institution B, and Institution C, upon invitation by current presidents, presidents emeriti may participate in university functions and events (e.g., donor events, symposiums).
- At Institution A, upon invitation by current presidents or other campus offices, presidents emeriti may participate in campus speaking engagements.
- At Institution B, upon invitation by current presidents or other campus offices, presidents emeriti may serve on institutional advisory boards. For example, the president emeritus served on the advisory board for an honors college and chaired the advisory board for the college of oceanography.
- When current presidents maintain full authority over whether presidents emeriti participate in university events, current presidents ensure that presidents emeriti do not overshadow them as the public face of the institution.



### Access to university resources

- At Institution B, presidents emeriti receive university identification and library cards, eligibility to enroll in university classes at staff rates, access to staff/faculty fitness classes, a university email address, support staff, and a business office. Contacts at Institution B state that the president emeritus uses the business office for external consulting and leadership engagements.
- At Institution A, presidents emeriti receive an office and support staff (e.g., assistant).



### Additional privileges

- At Institution B and Institution C, presidents emeriti receive a campus parking pass.
- At Institution A, presidents emeriti may receive life insurance.
- At Institution A, if presidents emeriti serve as tenured professors, they receive the same healthcare benefits of full-time, active employees of the university.
- At Institution A, presidents emeriti may receive compensation. In contrast, at Institution B and Institution C, the president emeritus role does not confer compensation.

## Presidents Emeriti May Occasionally Serve as Ad-hoc Sounding Boards for Current Presidents



Contacts at Institution A and Institution C emphasize the significant challenges associated with the presidential role at any institution. Contacts at both institutions

7) “President Emeritus Policy,” Institution B, accessed March 10, 2020; Article profiling Institution C’s president emeritus policy; “Emeritus Designation Policy,” Baltimore City Community College, accessed March 10, 2020, [https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus\\_Designation\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus_Designation_Policy.pdf); “President Emeritus Policy,” Goucher College, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://www.goucher.edu/policies/documents/President-Emeritus-Policy.pdf>; “President Emeritus Policy,” University of Dayton, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://udayton.edu/policies/mission/President%20Emeritus%20Policy.php>.




note that presidents emeriti are uniquely positioned—given their own experience as former presidents of the same institution—to provide valuable encouragement to current presidents. Contacts at Institution A and Institution B note that presidents emeriti may also provide advice about specific challenges facing the campus at the request of current presidents. Under the honorific status model, presidents emeriti engage in the ad-hoc sounding board role less frequently than do presidents emeriti under the advisory support model.

### Structure of Presidents Emeriti’s Role as a Sounding Board for Current Presidents at Profiled Institutions

Provide Encouragement	Offer Advice in Response to Specific Requests by the Current President
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacts at Institution A and Institution C note that presidents emeriti can provide valuable moral support and affirmation during challenging campus circumstances and crises that extend beyond the campus (e.g., financial crises, 9/11, pandemics). Specifically, presidents emeriti can recognize the challenge of leading an institution in these circumstances and affirm current presidents’ decision-making skills.</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacts at Institution B note that the president emeritus occasionally provides guidance on fundraising, such as how to approach a potential donor.</li> <li>• Contacts at Institution A state that the president emeritus—when asked by the president—provided guidance on personnel and board issues, as well as feedback on a draft of the strategic plan.</li> </ul>

Contacts at all profiled institutions stress that presidents emeriti should only provide advice when current presidents explicitly request this support. Contacts at Institution A add that if presidents emeriti engage by their own volition with university challenges or strategic decision-making, presidents emeriti will inevitably undermine current presidents’ authority.



#### Consider Including Ad-hoc Sounding Board Role in Formal President Emeritus Policy

Both Goucher College\* and the University of Dayton\*—in their president emeritus policies—stipulate that presidents emeriti may provide ad-hoc counsel to current presidents. Specifically, the Goucher College\* president emeritus policy states that “the current college president may call upon the president emeritus to provide counsel.”<sup>8</sup>

### Task Presidents Emeriti with “Behind-the-Scenes,” Project-Based Responsibilities Approved by Current Presidents

Under the advisory support model, presidents emeriti execute “behind-the-scenes” (i.e., not public-facing or board-facing) tasks for specific projects approved by current presidents. Rather than attend board meetings or deliver public university addresses, presidents emeriti may contact mid-level, individual donors to solicit funds for a new building. In addition, presidents emeriti may avoid strategic meetings and large-group meetings. At Institution A, the president emeritus also serves as a faculty member, but intentionally does not attend all-faculty meetings led by the current president.

Contacts at Institution C explain that when current presidents task presidents emeriti with “behind-the-scenes” responsibilities within specific projects, current presidents may avoid common pitfalls associated with more involved presidents emeriti.

### Solutions to Potential Pitfalls of President Emeritus Involvement Under the Advisory Support Model



#### Potential Pitfall

- The president emeritus oversteps their support role and—unintentionally or intentionally—challenges the current president’s leadership and institutional standing.
- Public- and board-facing involvement of the president emeritus triggers stakeholder misattributions of decision-making authority.
- For example, the board may attempt to circumvent the current president to consult the president emeritus on institutional matters.



#### Solution

- ▶ Clearly define the scope of the president emeritus role by assigning specific tasks associated with specific projects.
- ▶ Prevent the president emeritus from working on board-facing or strategic projects (except in an advisory capacity). This approach helps the current president establish their strategic authority with the board.

### Consider Assigning Development Projects to Presidents Emeriti to Take Advantage of Strong Donor Relationships

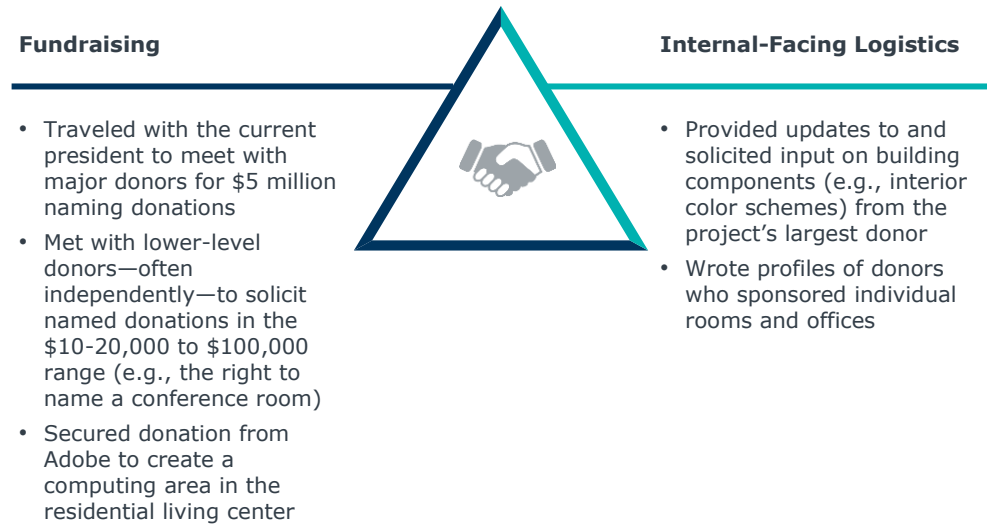
Given that presidents emeriti likely maintain strong relationships with donors, presidents emeriti can use those relationships to assist the institution in fundraising endeavors.

For example, at Institution C, the president emeritus oversaw the development of a \$100-million, residential living center on campus. Contacts explain that, typically, a college dean would oversee academic development projects specific to their college

8) “President Emeritus Policy,” University of Dayton, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://udayton.edu/policies/mission/President%20Emeritus%20Policy.php>.

(e.g., a new academic building for the school of engineering). However, because college deans do not work with residential life, the president emeritus stepped in to oversee the project. Specifically, the president emeritus at Institution C executed “behind-the-scenes” responsibilities—the president emeritus did not meet alone with major donors and did not lead fundraising events.

### Role of the President Emeritus in a Development Project at Institution C



At Institution B—though the president emeritus is significantly less involved with the current administration—the president emeritus previously led a \$150,000 fundraising initiative to acquire musical instruments for a music venue shared by the university and surrounding city. The president emeritus met with the current administration to ensure that the president emeritus did not solicit donors earmarked for the concurrent one-billion-dollar fundraising campaign led by the current president.

### Establish a Clear Demarcation between Presidents Emeriti and Current Presidents to Avoid Potential Confusion Over Institutional Leadership

Overly active presidents emeriti may create the misperception of another layer of central administration. Trustees, faculty, and staff may interpret an additional layer of central administration as a sign of institutional inefficiency.

Though assigning “behind-the-scenes,” project-based tasks can help mitigate this potential pitfall, contacts at Institution A and Institution C also implement additional strategies to ensure stakeholders view new presidents as the clear leader of the institution.

## Strategies to Clearly Demarcate the Transition of Institutional Leadership



### Grant a Sabbatical Year to Presidents Emeriti

*Purpose: to ensure that new presidents can set an institutional agenda without interference*

- Presidents emeriti at both Institution A and Institution C took a yearlong sabbatical (i.e., leave of absence) upon retirement from the presidency.
- During this year, the president emeritus at Institution A intentionally did not visit campus except by request of the current president. For example, the president emeritus attended the current president's inauguration ceremony.



### Minimize Mentions of Presidents Emeriti in External Communications

*Purpose: to ensure current presidents remain the public face of the institution*

- At Institution C, administrators ensure that public-facing communications (e.g., press releases, project webpage) related to the development project led by the president emeritus do not contain any mention of the president emeritus.
- When writing letters to donors, the president emeritus always indicates that they act on behalf of the current president.



### Ask Presidents Emeriti to Avoid Involvement in Campus Politics

*Purpose: to avoid negative impact on stakeholder perception of new presidents' leadership*

- At Institution A, contacts emphasize that presidents emeriti should not engage in campus politics and controversial campus issues.
- For example, when the administration had to respond to a surprise move by adjunct faculty to unionize, the president emeritus intentionally declined to contribute to the administration's response.

## Presidents Emeriti Should Gradually Cede Responsibilities Over Time

Under the advisory support model, presidents emeriti provide support primarily at the beginning of new presidents' tenure. Over time, new presidents will likely require the support of presidents emeriti less frequently. Accordingly, contacts at Institution A and Institution C state responsibilities associated with the president emeritus role will decrease over time.

At Institution C, the president emeritus and current president initially planned to use the advisory support model for one year. However, contacts report that both parties mutually agreed to extend the model for a second year due to the positive contributions of the president emeritus during the first year. (At the time of report publication, the president emeritus was nearing the end of this second year.) Accordingly, after the president emeritus completes their current development project, contacts state that the president emeritus may not oversee any more projects moving forward. Contacts note that the president emeritus expects to devote more time to their faculty role (e.g., teaching, research).

Presidents emeriti at institutions that utilize more involved support models—Institution A and Institution C—retired from the president role recently. Both former presidents at Institution A and Institution C assumed the emeritus title in 2018. In contrast, the former president at Institution B assumed the emeritus role over 20 years ago. Should presidents emeriti at Institution A and Institution C possess

gradually fewer responsibilities in the upcoming years, the president emeritus role at these two institutions may change to resemble the honorific status model in use at Institution B.

## Transitioning Donor Relations

### **Regardless of President Emeritus Model, Outgoing Presidents Should Facilitate the Transition of Donor Relations**

Since outgoing presidents worthy of emeritus status provided distinguished service to the institution for a substantial period, they possess close relationships with high-priority donors. Presidents emeriti should use these relationships to facilitate new donor relationships with incoming presidents.

For example, at Institution C, the president emeritus had served as provost and president for two decades and cultivated strong connections with donors—some of whom became close, personal friends. Similarly, the president emeritus at Institution A served as president for nearly 20 years and—due to the significant growth of the institution during their tenure—had awarded more diplomas than the previous seven presidents combined. Thus, contacts state that a significant proportion of alumni from Institution A view the president emeritus as an integral part of the institution. Contacts at both institutions state that the outgoing president provided crucial support to transfer donor relationships to the incoming president.

At Institution C, contacts state that the outgoing and incoming presidents overlapped for two months at the institution. The two individuals used this time period to transition donor relationships. Contacts at Institution C state that, because the incoming president had served as provost at the university for five years, the incoming president had already cultivated some rapport with donors. Contacts note that, if the incoming president did not previously serve at the institution, the outgoing president may have needed more time to transition donor relationships.

At Institution A, the outgoing and incoming presidents—who overlapped for three months in office—used the following strategies to transition key donor relationships.

## Strategies to Transition Key Donor Relationships Before and After the Outgoing President's Retirement at Institution A



### **Before: Co-Host Events with Key Donors**

The outgoing and incoming presidents hosted joint events with key donors. During these events, the outgoing president introduced the incoming president.



### **Before: Conduct Joint Visits to Individual Donors**

The outgoing and incoming presidents conducted joint visits to individual donors to discuss a transition plan with these donors. For example, the outgoing president, incoming president, and donor discussed the current nature of the relationship between the donor and the institution, the donor's agenda, and how the incoming president could steward the relationship.



### **Before: Coordinate Joint Appearance at Outgoing President's Last Meeting with Board of Trustees**

The incoming president attended the final meeting between the outgoing president and the board of trustees—often made up of key donors. This collaborative gesture demonstrated continuity of strong leadership. In this meeting, the incoming and outgoing presidents also discussed final transition logistics with the board.



### **After: Coordinate Selective Joint Appearances at Donor-Facing University Events**

The president emeritus attends some ceremonies, hosted by the current president, that celebrate the dedication of campus buildings to donors. Contacts at Institution A state that the president emeritus intentionally does not attend all donor events to avoid overshadowing the current president.

EAB's [Sustaining Momentum During Presidential Transitions](#) provides tactics to facilitate the presidential transition process. In addition, the [CAO & the President](#) section of EAB's [Chief Advancement Officer Onboarding Center](#) offers guidance on how advancement leaders and presidents can establish successful working relationships.



### **Outgoing Presidents Should Plan to Fully Transition Donor Relationships**

Contacts at Institution A state that, although presidents emeriti may hold strong, personal relationships with specific donors, current presidents should avoid tasking presidents emeriti to manage specific donor relationships. This approach may complicate donor allegiance to current presidents and negatively impact donor perceptions of current presidents' leadership capacity.

## 3) Policy Design

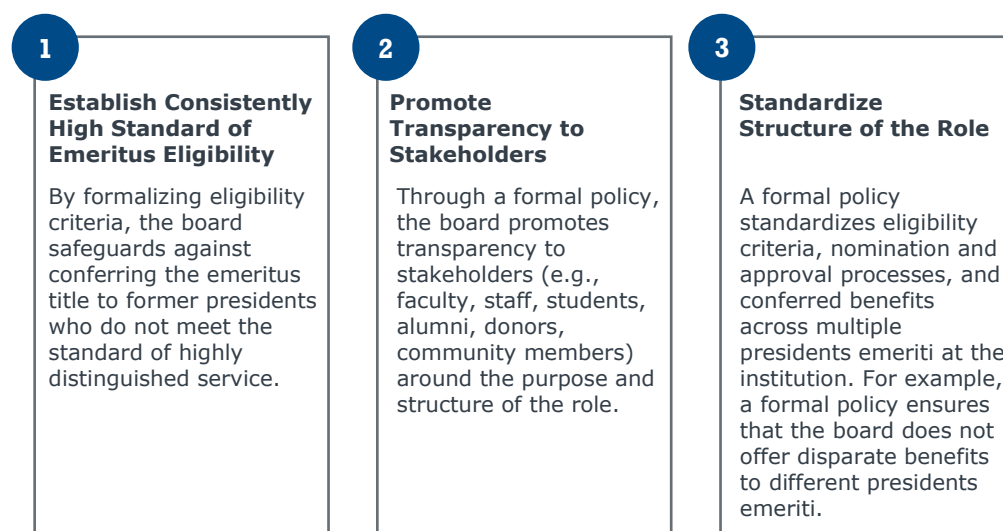
---

### Policy Motivation

#### Establish a Formal Policy to Promote Transparency and Standardization of Processes and Benefits

The board of trustees should communicate both president emeritus eligibility criteria and the president emeritus nomination and approval process through a formal policy. The board should also indicate the benefits the president emeritus title confers to its holder. A formal president emeritus policy yields the following advantages for the institution.

#### Value of Establishing a Formal President Emeritus Policy



### Eligibility and Benefits

#### Clearly Articulate Eligibility Criteria for the President Emeritus Title

President emeritus policies at profiled institutions and other institutions of higher education stipulate common eligibility criteria for the president emeritus title. Administrators at independent schools may also consider the following criteria when designing the headmaster emeritus role.

## Eligibility Criteria for Presidents Emeriti at Profiled and Reviewed Institutions of Higher Education<sup>9</sup>

Headmasters emeriti at Besant Hill School of Happy Valley\* and Christ Presbyterian Academy\* served as headmaster at their institution for seven and 29 years, respectively. The headmaster emeritus at Gilmour Academy\* served at their institution for 38 years.<sup>10</sup> These independent schools do not publish publicly available headmaster emeritus policies.



### Minimum Length of Service to the Institution

- At Institution B, presidents emeriti must have served as president for at least five years.
- At Goucher College\* and the University of Dayton\*, presidents emeriti must have served as president for at least ten years.
- At Baltimore City Community College\* and Institution C, presidents emeriti must have served for at least 10 years at the institution. The policies do not specify that these individuals must have served as president for all ten years.

### Evidence of Exemplary Service to the Institution

- At Institution C, presidents emeriti must possess tenure at the institution and remain in “good standing” with the board at the time of resignation or retirement.
- At Institution B, presidents emeriti must have achieved “honorable and distinguished service” as university president.
- At Baltimore City Community College\*, presidents emeriti must have demonstrated—during their presidency—distinguished contributions in one or more of the following areas: “college and community service, leadership, and the fulfillment of professional responsibilities.”



### Retirement from a Leadership Position

- At Institution C, former presidents may only be named to emeritus status if they do not serve in a leadership position (i.e., position higher than faculty) at the university following the presidency.
- At Institution B, presidents must retire from Institution B to be considered eligible for emeritus status. For example, if a president of Institution B becomes a president of another university, that individual would not be eligible for emeritus status at Institution B. Similarly, at Goucher College\*, administrators reserve the president emeritus status for presidents who are about to retire or have already retired.
- This stipulation helps safeguard against the possibility that presidents emeriti will assume a role that confers administrative authority at any institution.



## Grant the Board the Exclusive Privilege to Nominate and Approve Presidents Emeriti

By giving the board executive authority over the process of nominating and approving presidents emeriti, administrators ensure that the emeritus nomination process

9) “President Emeritus Policy,” Institution B, accessed March 10, 2020; Article profiling Institution C’s president emeritus policy; “Emeritus Designation Policy,” Baltimore City Community College, accessed March 10, 2020, [https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus\\_Designation\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus_Designation_Policy.pdf); “President Emeritus Policy,” Goucher College, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://www.goucher.edu/policies/documents/President-Emeritus-Policy.pdf>; “President Emeritus Policy,” University of Dayton, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://udayton.edu/policies/mission/President%20Emeritus%20Policy.php>.

10) John Overman, “Students Applaud Brother Robert Lavelle,” *The Lance*, April 10, 2015, <https://gilmourlance.org/2015/04/10/students-applaud-brother-robert-lavelle/>; “About,” Cushing Academy, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://www.cushing.org/about/head-of-school>; “Faculty and Staff,” Christ Presbyterian Academy, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://www.cpalions.org/about/faculty-and-staff>.



involves the perspectives of multiple institutional decision-makers. Administrators should allow the board to withdraw the emeritus status at their discretion.

At Institution B, Institution C, and the University of Dayton\*, governing boards nominate and approve presidents emeriti. For example, at the University of Dayton\*, a member of the board of trustees may nominate university presidents who are retiring or have already retired to become presidents emeriti. This status must be approved by a board majority vote. At both universities, the board maintains full authority to withdraw the president emeritus title at its discretion.

## Stipulate Benefits of President Emeritus Status in the Policy

The board should clearly outline the benefits given to presidents emeriti in the formal policy. Four considerations for benefits are outlined below.

### Considerations for Determining President Emeritus Benefits

#### Available Resources



- The board should consider available institutional resources when determining benefits for presidents emeriti.
- For example, the board should consider availability of facility space if selecting an office space for presidents emeriti and should consider budget flexibility if offering compensation for the role.

#### Extension of Presidential Benefits



- The board may consider extending certain presidential benefits to presidents emeriti, if appropriate.
- At Institution A, the president emeritus continues to receive life insurance, which was originally part of the compensation package during their presidency.

#### Location of President Emeritus Office



- If the board decides to grant offices to presidents emeriti, the board should identify spaces that are not centrally located on campus—as a visual symbol that presidents emeriti no longer hold administrative authority.
- For example, the president emeritus at Institution A occupies an office located in the alumni center. The president emeritus at Institution B occupies an office located in an off-campus building.

#### Benefits Related to Faculty Role



- If presidents emeriti also serve as a full-time faculty member, the board should give them the same benefits of full-time faculty at the institution.
- For example, at Institution A, the president emeritus, who concurrently serves as a faculty member, receives the same health insurance options as do other faculty members.

### **Explicitly State that Presidents Emeriti Do Not Hold Administrative Authority**

At all profiled institutions, contacts emphasize that presidents emeriti do not—and should not—exercise any administrative authority. For example, Institution B’s president emeritus policy explicitly states, “presidents emeriti do not exercise any of the authority or administrative functions associated with holding a faculty or staff position at the university.”<sup>11</sup> President emeritus policies at other institutions also stipulate this expectation. For example, in nearly identical language, the University of Dayton\* president emeritus policy states, “presidents emeriti do not exercise any of the authority or administrative functions associated with holding a staff position at the university.”<sup>12</sup>

Institution B’s policy does provide one exception for presidents emeriti who concurrently serve as a faculty member. At Institution B—as well as Institution A and Institution C—outgoing presidents may retire to a faculty role at the institution. In this circumstance, a former president would hold dual titles: president emeritus and professor. As a professor, this individual possesses the same authority held by other faculty members at the institution. However, the president emeritus title itself does not confer any administrative authority.

Contacts at Institution A note that when presidents emeriti do not understand that their role possesses no administrative authority, they may attempt to intervene in new presidents’ decision-making process. This interference can create detrimental effects on new presidents’ reputation at the institution. To avoid this common pitfall, contacts at Institution A recommend that presidents emeriti report directly to current presidents.

### **To Allow Incoming Presidents Full Discretion on the Use of Presidents Emeriti, Do Not Outline Formal Responsibilities in the Policy**

Contacts at both Institution A and the Institution C stress that administrators should grant current presidents full discretion to determine the responsibilities of presidents emeriti. The extent to which a current president relies on a president emeritus’ support depends on multiple factors such as leadership style, vision for the institution, and the nature of the working relationship between the two individuals. Thus, the board should not include the nature or scope of responsibilities of presidents emeriti in the formal policy. Accordingly, at Institution C, the president emeritus and current president did not formalize the specific responsibilities that the president emeritus would execute (e.g., oversee development project).

To ensure that both individuals understood the nature of the president emeritus role, the current president at Institution C articulated a vision for the role prior to leadership transition. Once the current president and president emeritus at Institution C developed a mutual understanding of the emeritus role, they communicated the structure of this role to the board. In addition, the president emeritus meets with the current president once or twice a quarter, which allows the two individuals to regularly discuss the president emeritus’ involvement. Headmasters and headmasters

<sup>11</sup> “President Emeritus Policy,” Institution B, accessed March 10, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> “President Emeritus Policy,” University of Dayton, accessed March 10, 2020, President Emeritus Policy,” University of Dayton, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://udayton.edu/policies/mission/President%20Emeritus%20Policy.php>.

emeriti at independent schools may find regular meetings useful to monitor the headmaster emeritus' support role and finetune the role as needed.

### **Consider President Emeritus Role Structures from Presidential Predecessors and Other Institutions Before Defining Emeritus Responsibilities**

Contacts at Institution C state that the incoming president had experience working at one of the Big Ten universities (i.e., large, public research universities) and thus based the structure of the new-in-kind president emeritus role at Institution C on models from that university. At Institution A, contacts state that the president emeritus role has long been part of the university's history. Thus, the current president emeritus looked to their two predecessors (and fellow presidents emeriti) to determine how they and the current president could structure the role.

## 4) Research Methodology

---

### Project Challenges

The Forum explored the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the president emeritus role at contact institutions?
- What are the criteria to become a president emeritus at contact institutions?
- What is the nomination and approval process for presidents emeriti at contact institutions?
- What benefits do presidents emeriti at contact institutions receive?
- How long is the president emeritus appointment at contact institutions?
- What are the responsibilities of presidents emeriti at contact institutions?
- At contact institutions, how did outgoing and incoming presidents transfer advancement responsibilities?
- How did contact institutions structure the president emeritus role to proactively mitigate potential stakeholder misperceptions of the current president's leadership?

### Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries (eab.com).
- Baltimore City Community College. "Emeritus Designation Policy." Accessed March 10, 2020. [https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus\\_Designation\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.bccc.edu/cms/lib/MD02000050/Centricity/domain/53/board%20policies/Emeritus_Designation_Policy.pdf).
- Christ Presbyterian Academy. "Faculty and Staff." Accessed March 10, 2020. <https://www.cpalions.org/about/faculty-and-staff>.
- Cushing Academy. "About." Accessed March 10, 2020. <https://www.cushing.org/about/head-of-school>.
- Goucher College. "President Emeritus Policy." Accessed March 10, 2020. <https://www.goucher.edu/policies/documents/President-Emeritus-Policy.pdf>.
- Institution B. "President Emeritus Policy." Accessed March 10, 2020.
- Institution C. "President Emeritus Policy." Accessed March 10, 2020.
- National Center for Education Statistics. "College Navigator." Accessed March 10, 2020. <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>.
- Niche. "Niche." Accessed March 10, 2020. <https://www.niche.com/>.
- Overman, John. "Students Applaud Brother Robert Lavelle." *The Lance*. April 10, 2015. <https://gilmourlance.org/2015/04/10/students-applaud-brother-robert-lavelle/>.
- University of Dayton. "President Emeritus Policy." Accessed March 10, 2020. <https://udayton.edu/policies/mission/President%20Emeritus%20Policy.php>.

## Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed presidents emeriti at institutions of higher education. The Forum identified presidents emeriti from publicly available institution-affiliated webpages, publications, and news articles.

The Forum did not identify publicly available headmaster emeritus policies at any independent schools. The Forum found a few examples of institution webpages that featured headmaster emeriti—however, these webpages did not provide information on the nature of the headmaster emeritus role.

### A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Type of Institution	Region	Approximate Enrollment
<b>Baltimore City Community College*</b>	Higher Education	Mid-Atlantic	4,500
<b>Besant Hill School of Happy Valley*</b>	K-12 Independent School	Pacific West	100
<b>Christ Presbyterian Academy*</b>	K-12 Independent School	South	1,300
<b>Gilmour Academy*</b>	K-12 Independent School	Midwest	700
<b>Goucher College*</b>	Higher Education	Mid-Atlantic	2,300
<b>Institution A</b>	Higher Education	South	7,000
<b>Institution B</b>	Higher Education	Pacific West	31,000
<b>Institution C</b>	Higher Education	Mountain West	33,000
<b>University of Dayton*</b>	Higher Education	Midwest	11,200

\*Institutions profiled through secondary research