



Laurence,

As I begin my third year leading AGB, I want to recognize that board professionals—designated as the primary individuals who staff governing boards—are vital assets to strategic board leadership. With titles that generally include secretary to the board, chief of staff, assistant to the president, board liaison, and/or vice president for strategic initiatives, board professionals are instrumental in enabling boards to focus on making sound, well-informed decisions to advance institutional goals.

In their multifaceted roles, board professionals serve their boards and presidents as governance experts, professional resources, confidants, educators, gatekeepers, historians, ambassadors, and more. As boards heighten their engagement as strategic thought partners, board professionals function as trusted advisors and liaisons to support board members and executive leaders as they make significant choices about the future of their institutions.

The **2020 AGB Survey of Board Professionals** highlights a marked progression in perceptions of the complexities and responsibilities of their jobs even compared to five years ago. Further, the data from our **COVID-19's Effects on Board Professionals** survey show that the responsibilities of board professionals continue to expand to address an ever-growing set of governance challenges and opportunities.

As you consider how to leverage the expertise of your board professional, consider these questions:

For board and committee chairs:

- How can you and your president best take advantage of the skills and expertise of your board professional as you set clear expectations for your board and committees?
- How can your board professional help your board members understand both their strategic role and their fiduciary responsibility to provide oversight of the institution's progress toward its goals?
- How can your board professional assist you in developing and applying an equity lens in your governance structures and processes, as outlined in the [*AGB Board of Directors' Statement on Justice, Equity, and Inclusion*](#) and in the latest episode of the [*Trusteeship Podcast*](#)?

For board members:

- How can your board professional help you, your committees, and president stay focused on issues of consequence as outlined in [*AGB's Principles of Trusteeship*](#)?
- How can your board professional help you broaden your understanding of strategic priorities facing higher education and Howard University?

For presidents:

- How can you elevate the professional competencies of your board professional to increase their capacity to support the board's priorities and functioning?
- How can your board professional help your board members serve as strategic thought partners for you and your leadership team?

For board professionals:

- How can you optimize the value and impact of your board members' time?
- How can you assist your president and board chair in helping the board focus on strategic priorities such as student success, retention, and graduation; financial and cyber risk oversight; academic quality oversight

and workforce preparation; donor and constituent relations; and institutional reputation?

Over AGB's 100 years of service, we have seen the steady and growing need for agile, forward-thinking board professionals who assist their boards in recognizing and responding to the intense challenges in higher education. Whether the board professional is part of a board-liaison team or fulfills those responsibilities individually, their commitment to board governance will influence the board's capacity to be strategic and impactful.

AGB Conference News

We are pleased to announce that both the National Conference on Trusteeship and the Board Professionals Conference will be conducted virtually in April 2022. After reviewing attendee and speaker feedback, examining the environmental landscape, and in discussions with AGB members, we have determined that many of our members appreciated the opportunity in this time of constrained resources to participate in our conferences without the added expenses associated with travel. While our institutions and systems continue to address the impact of the pandemic, a virtual program allows for greater diversity of attendees to cost-effectively share and interact with their peers. Preliminary information about the [National Conference on Trusteeship is here](#), and information about the [Board Professionals Conference is here](#).

Thank you for your commitment to strategic board governance. As always, I welcome your input and feedback.

Best regards,

Henry

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