Board of Trustees Self-Assessment

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a systematic, ongoing process of collecting, interpreting, and acting on information to ensure that a Board is meeting its goals. A thorough and thoughtful self-assessment process can improve Board alignment around key issues, provide fresh perspectives on the Board's and management's functioning, reveal gaps in member composition, and strengthen the effectiveness of the Board's overall procedures and practices. Assessment is an essential element of good governance and disclosing the nature and outcome of the Board's evaluation process signals the Board's commitment to its governance responsibilities.

THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

By establishing a thorough assessment process and a clear plan to address the findings, a Board holds itself accountable, demonstrates its commitment to serve the institution and its mission, and promotes stronger Board performance. Board assessment can also help members understand their individual and collective responsibilities; improve relationships among members and with the president; clarify expectations; enhance engagement and make more effective use of members' time; help individual Board members avoid conflicts of interest; help reveal the strengths and challenges of the Board's current culture and group dynamics; encourage the Board to reach consensus about its goals and focus on strategic priorities; determine whether Board organization, structure, and agendas are aligned with strategic priorities; identify areas of concern, barriers to success, and new ways to strengthen Board effectiveness; and help recalibrate the Board and ensure that all members are in agreement about its core purposes and priorities.

Boards that undertake periodic self assessment that includes a process of informed, meaningful committee restructuring, and make such processes an ongoing part of their practice, improve themselves and advance their institutions. Ultimately the enhancements that result from this informed and intentional change strengthen the quality of an institution's governance and enhance the functioning of an institution of higher education for all those who teach, learn, and work there. Restructuring strengthens the fiduciary focus and capacity of a Board's committees, enhances the effectiveness of the Board itself, increases member engagement, and uses members' time and talent more productively, all of which adds value to the institution.

In addition, newly-organized committees with redesigned processes signal to a university community that its Board is focusing its attention and spending its time on the things most important to the institution and its constituents. When difficult and controversial issues arise, a Board that is continually tailored in structure to meet an institution's present and emerging needs establishes solid frameworks for addressing such issues effectively in the short run, while also strengthening the institution in the long run, including the success of the institution's shared governance framework.

In May, 2020, the Board of Trustees of Arcadia University ("Board") launched a self-assessment with the help of an outside higher education consulting firm. An ad hoc committee was formed which consisted of seven members of the Board of varying backgrounds and experience levels to assist with guiding the process. A Trustee self-assessment survey was conducted in June 2020, and the results were shared with the Board at a meeting in August 2020. The results revealed that:
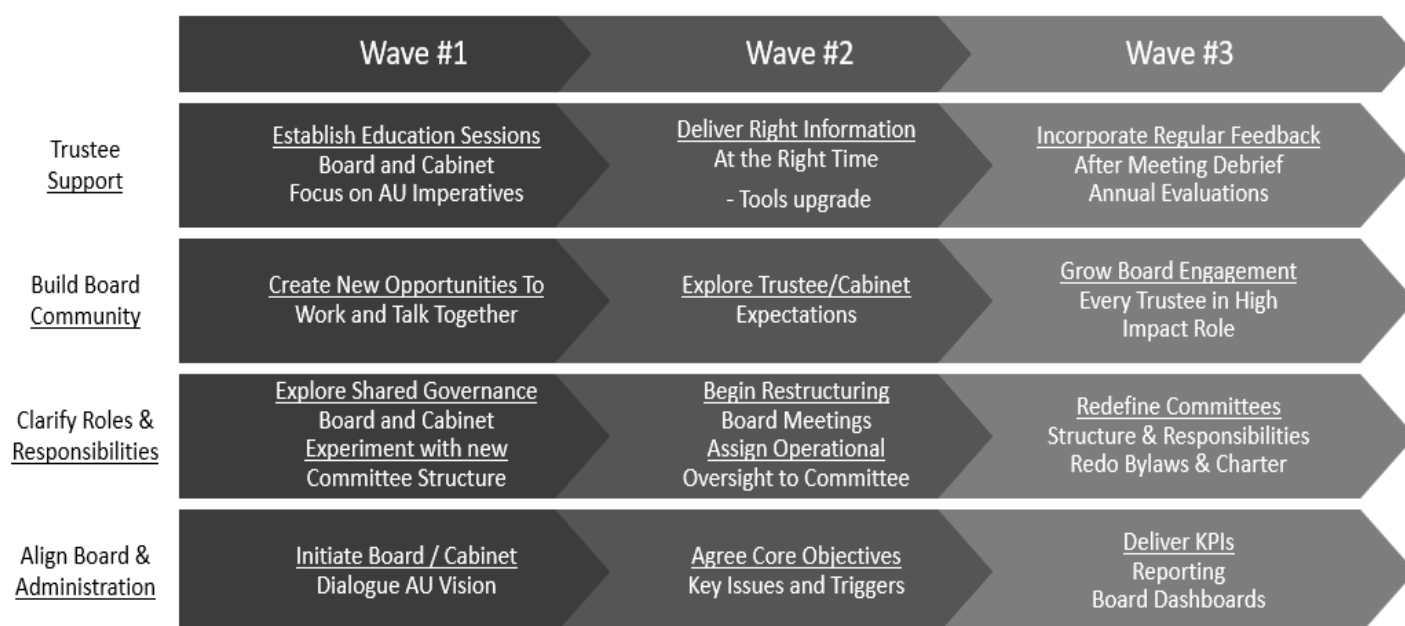
- The Board is proud of its accomplishments in the past two years, proud of its partnership with the President, and supportive of recent administrative changes;

- The Board is concerned about the future of higher education broadly, and about the specific challenges Arcadia faces;
- The Trustees have a wide range of views on how to enhance the Board and make it more effective; and
- The Trustees are poised to make needed changes to create a more productive Board culture to support the University well into the future.

Building on these observations, one-on-one discussions between the ad hoc committee members and individual Trustees led to the identification of four preliminary action areas for on-going consideration:

- Engage the Board and Cabinet to **clarify roles and responsibilities**, including setting clear boundaries on Board fiduciary oversight, augmenting the Board's consultative roles, and evaluating alternative committee structures to better serve the University.

- **Build Board community** and connections, including identifying means for building interpersonal relationships.
- **Align the Board and administration on goals and outcomes**, including the University vision and key performance factors.
- **Improve Trustee support** to maximize their effectiveness, including more education, timely distribution of materials, and clear follow-through.

WAVES OF CHANGE

These ideas were shared with the Board at the October 2020 Board Meeting and led to deeper evaluation of the means to implement needed changes. A visual summary of the plan for change emerged, titled Waves of Change.

	Wave #1	Wave #2	Wave #3
Trustee Support	Establish Education Sessions Board and Cabinet Focus on AU Imperatives	Deliver Right Information At the Right Time - Tools upgrade	Incorporate Regular Feedback After Meeting Debrief Annual Evaluations
Build Board Community	Create New Opportunities To Work and Talk Together	Explore Trustee/Cabinet Expectations	Grow Board Engagement Every Trustee in High Impact Role
Clarify Roles & Responsibilities	Explore Shared Governance Board and Cabinet Experiment with new Committee Structure	Begin Restructuring Board Meetings Assign Operational Oversight to Committee	Redefine Committees Structure & Responsibilities Redo Bylaws & Charter
Align Board & Administration	Initiate Board / Cabinet Dialogue AU Vision	Agree Core Objectives Key Issues and Triggers	Deliver KPIs Reporting Board Dashboards

This work led to the further development of a plan which included a prioritized change agenda of topics and goals to be addressed and accomplished throughout the year, starting with Board education, community building, exploration of more meaningful shared governance, and vision-casting. Further one-on-one Trustee conversations took place in December 2020 to socialize these ideas. The Board also reviewed the existing Board committee structure to determine if it supports the University's current Adaptive Strategy as well as the work of the Board going forward.

The Board concluded that all of the work that it needed to do going forward landed in five categories: (i) academic excellence and innovation and support for student success; (ii) mission-driven quality and effectiveness; (iii) institutional integrity; (iv) stewardship and sustainability; and (v) impactful trusteeship. Given this scope, the Board then needed to determine what committees were needed to strengthen committee and Board performance in order to be a Board of the future. Three options for committee restructure were shared with the Board at the May 2021 meeting:

1. **Enhanced Current Committee Structure**: Keeping the same committees but tweaking some of their responsibilities to ensure all of the categories above were represented, i.e., TCGS Committee would not only be responsible for issues involving TCGS, but would also be responsible for global engagement and global sustainability for the entire University.

2. **Committee of the Whole**: The Committee of the Whole is an alternative committee structure in which the Board conducts business with all members, giving them the opportunity to have input and discuss matters affecting the entire University. With no separation of duties, every Trustee hears and decides everything. This is a very transformational option and something that seems to work well for smaller boards.

3. **Consolidation and Alignment**: Very simply, taking the five categories described above (Academic excellence and innovative support for student success, Mission-driven quality and effectiveness, Institutional integrity, Stewardship and sustainability, and Impactful trusteeship) and converting them into committees, ensuring that all of the work contained in these categories would be covered.

The Board ultimately chose to consolidate and align the committees because this approach synthesizes the specific work that needs to be overseen by the Board with the Adaptive Strategy, the Waves of Change, general responsibilities under the University's Bylaws, and best practices for board governance. The benefits of this model are:

- Trustee skills are matched more meaningfully with committee work because we are not just adding bodies to committees, rather, we are being purposeful and intentional in aligning skills with work goals;

- less time commitment for individual members (Trustees serve on only one committee);
- leads to greater trustee engagement because skills are more meaningfully utilized and their time is not spread thin by being on more than one committee;
- less chance of mico-governance;
- greater meeting flexibility (e.g. length, number) because Trustees belong to one committee instead of two and their schedules are more open, which leads to greater focus;
- there is concentrated attention on issues of greatest importance, keeping the focus on strategic and generative thinking and discussion; and
- the Board would also have an Executive Committee that would be enhanced by adding the responsibilities of the former Governance Committee to it -- combining the work of the two committees that are responsible for performing the administrative work of the Board resulting in greater efficiencies and synergies in that work.

And most importantly, the values of justice, equity, and inclusion would be integrated into the work of the committees as discussed further in the section pertaining to next steps.

REDESIGNED COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

During the summer of 2021, the Board worked to socialize this new committee structure with all of the newly assigned committee chairs and their respective administrative liaisons. Inaugural committee meetings were held in early October 2021 for all of the members following a Board Retreat, facilitated by a consultant from the Association of Governing Boards (AGB), who educated the Board on best practices in implementing committee restructure as well as understanding proper roles and responsibilities. The following is a list of the new Committees and their inaugural members for 2021-2022.

Committee Name	Administrative Liaison	Chair of Committee	Committee Members	Other Advisors
Executive Committee	Margie Callahan, General Counsel and Secretary of the University	John Rollins	Ken Weirman, Gretchen Santamour, Wes Hardin, Lynne Cannon, Danny Shoy, Elliott Roth, Babs Krug*, Alison Madsen* *non voting advisors	
Institutional Sustainability Committee	Joan Singleton, Vice President of Administration and	Wes Hardin	Michel Paul, Jim Moran, Pat Cornet,	Kim Erikson, Assistant Professor

	Finance, Andy Law, Dean and Executive Director, Brigette A. Bryant, Vice President for Development and Alumni Engagement		John Rollins	
Educational Quality and Student Success Committee	Jeff Rutenbeck, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, Rock Hall, Vice President of Enrollment Management Andy Law, Dean and Executive Director, Andrew Goretsky, Dean of Students	Lynne Cannon	Allison Rossett, Marc McKenna, Dave Sadoff, Maggie Lyons	Matt Heitzman, Assistant Professor
Mission and Identity Committee	Brigette A. Bryant, Vice President for Development and Alumni Engagement	Danny Shoy	Ken Weirman, Kevin Shollenberger, Kyle Kammerle, Babs Krug	
Institutional Integrity Committee	Joan Singleton, Vice President of Administration and Finance, Margie Callahan, General Counsel and Secretary of the University Rashmi Radhakrishnan, Vice President for IT and Chief Information Office	Elliott Roth	Ron Eicholtz, Gretchen Santamour, Alison Madsen, Ashish Parmar	

ADDITIONAL CHANGES

Once the committees were redesigned, the next steps included:

- Creating new committee Charters to clearly state each committee's purpose and goals, and to ensure JEDI and ABRI values are included in each committee;
- Redefining committee and Board agendas so that they sync with one another and with each other committee;
- Updating committee year-long agendas and reviewing them annually during an Executive Committee meeting to align with the Board's governance responsibilities and the institution's Adaptive Strategy and to keep committees focused on their fiduciary purposes;
- Reviewing and revising the University Bylaws and other corporate documents;
- Reviewing the roles of the individual Trustees and creation of the Trustee Statement of Commitment and Responsibilites for each Trustee to sign and abide by;
- Forging a partnership between the chairs of each newly formed committee and the Executive Committee to ensure that the Board's goals and agendas are supported and carried out by its

committees, with committee chairs in regular dialogue with the Executive Committee to ensure their annual goals and agendas remain focused on the most important fiduciary issues of Arcadia;

- Development of a [Presidential Performance Evaluation Policy](#) to ensure the systemic and consistent review of the performance and compensation of the President annually; and
- Committing to greater shared governance by determining the appropriate balance of participation of faculty, administrators, and the Board in order to ensure the vitality and viability of the institution with a strong, collaborative relationship and meaningful engagement among all constituencies. As a result, the following initiatives were adopted by the Board in February, 2023:
  - Annually invite one or more faculty members to join each of the Board's standing committees (except the Executive Committee) as non-voting members;
  - Use Board meetings as an opportunity for faculty and Trustees to engage with one another by inviting a faculty member to each Board meeting to present on a topic of their choosing to educate and inform the Board, with the understanding that such engagement should be intentional, purposeful, and varied with faculty offering their accomplishments, thoughts, advice, and concerns and Trustees allocating their time and expertise to ensure a two way dialogue;
  - Appoint a full-time faculty member to the Board with voting privileges; and
  - Appoint each elected Faculty Senate President as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Board.

CONCLUSION

To demonstrate that the Board is committed to continuing the work of evidence-based planning and assessment, the Board approved the [Board of Trustees Evaluation Policy](#) to ensure that assessment is done systematically by the Board and includes not only periodic full Board assessment, but also annual meeting, committee, individual trustee, and Board Chair assessments. The next comprehensive Board assessment is scheduled to begin in 2025 or thereafter as determined by the Executive Committee.