Introductory Discussion

Leadership of a public governance board is through explicity policy development which provides the opportunity to think and lead “big.” The Board must assume responsibility for setting the parameters of its control within legal boundaries, reach agreements on how it functions, plan for its own evaluation, and actively participate in on-going Board development.

There are some areas where changes and/or modifications might be suggested for how the Board conducts its business. These include, but are not limited to:

- Board meeting structure, frequency, and content;
- Use of Board Committees to accomplish the Board’s agenda;
- Board Orientation and ON-going Development;
- Board Goal Setting and Evaluation of Performance, and
- Campus Visitations.

The accompanying pages provide a framework for discussion, decisions, and possibly change in the way in which the business of the Board is conducted in the future.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Agenda Topics</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Board meeting 6 times per year:</td>
<td>Thurs. afternoon – dinner</td>
<td>Thurs. afternoon – Committee meetings (if Committee structure is used); Board Development; Study Sessions (on topics relevant to current/proposed work)</td>
<td>Portland: an off-campus site to be determined (not at PSU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb/April/June/July/Oct/Dec or Jan/Mar/May/Jun</td>
<td>Friday a.m. – noon</td>
<td>Friday morning – Business meeting</td>
<td>Each meeting on a different campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thursday afternoon – Eve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friday a.m. – noon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Board meeting every month (12 times per year)</td>
<td>Thurs. afternoon – eve</td>
<td>Thurs. afternoon/evening – campus visit</td>
<td>4 meetings on campuses; 8 meetings in Portland at PSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friday a.m. – noon</td>
<td>Thurs. afternoon/evening – campus visit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friday a.m. – noon</td>
<td>Friday morning – Business meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These are suggested variations. Other combinations of the above or different ideas should be considered.*
Board Committees

Over the years, there has been a rather regular shift in how the Board organizes its work: standing Board committees; no committees; and, ad hoc or specific topic-focused committees. The question for the Board is whether the current committee structure is working to the benefit of the Board in its deliberations? Some assumptions might be useful in framing the issue.

ASSUMPTION: The Committee structure provides a more efficient way to discuss issues and arrive at decisions.

PRO: While half of the Board is working on one set of topics at a given time, the other half is able to focus on another aspect of the Board agenda (B & F and SSP as current examples). This means that twice as much time can be devoted to one set of issues than would be available otherwise.

CON: Little efficiency is gained by the committee structure because the items must be repeated again in the Board meeting. If there is a complex issue, the same questions might be raised in the Board meeting that had already been raised, discussed, and agreed to in the committee meeting.

ASSUMPTION: A committee structure acts as an impediment for Board members to become familiar with and involved in the range of issues with which the Board must deal.

PRO: Although Board members are expected to (and in most cases do) read all of the Board materials, not just those that apply to the committee to which they are assigned, the fact is that the real understanding of an issue/item comes from presentations by staff and Board discussions. If most of this occurs in the Committee meeting, only half the Board has a real understanding of the issues. The full Board should be familiar with all aspects of the work and responsibilities, and this structure does not support that.

CON: There are no impediments to Board members fully participating in discussions and decision-making. If there is an item of importance to an individual Board member and it is being “heard” in a Committee to which that individual is not a member, he/she can: call the Chancellor or appropriate Vice Chancellor and discuss the item prior to the meeting; indicate a desire to attend the other Committee meeting at the time a particular item is being discussed; or, request a “full hearing” of the item during the regular Board meeting.
ASSUMPTION: The current Committees (by name and content) accurately reflect the focus and content of the meeting agendas.

PRO: The current Committees are, at least in name, common among governing boards. Strategic planning is one of the buzz words of Boards and in this time of unstable funding and changes brought on by technology, it is all the more important for Boards to be agile and capable of more timely change. Budget and Finance are likewise seen as the underpinning of the work of governing boards.

CON: The current committees are not appropriately named. The SSP Committee focuses at least half of its time on academic issues and topics. There have been occasions when members question why they are dealing with academic affairs, when the Committee is planning. If there are going to be committees, would it be more accurate to have three: Budget and Finance, Academic Policies and Programs, and System Strategic Planning? With only 11 members, having three or four members on a Committee might be even less efficient than the present two.

ASSUMPTION: The current committee structure should be eliminated altogether and replaced with ad hoc work groups as the topics change and become priorities for the Board.

PRO: The work of the Board could be greatly enhanced by full Board discussion of topics. The Board could actually take time to study issues and give them a full hearing when required. Likewise, if the items are simply routine, they would not be elevated to more attention and discussion because part of the Board membership did not have enough background information and felt a need for a full blown discussion in the Board meeting. Using small work groups that have definite parameters so they do not achieve “tenured” status in the Board structure would be a much more efficient way to do the Board business.

CON: There is history for having two standing committees and they should be continued. Many boards around the country have standing committees and it appears to work well. With some rotation of the membership, all Board members would have an opportunity to become well acquainted with the full agenda of the Board. One possible solution would be to have the Committees meet sequentially so all Board members could participate in the work of both.
Board Orientation and On-going Development

There has been a lack of attention, over the years, to Board member orientation and on-going development. Many members of this Board have current or past experience serving on a board, many of them prestigious ones. There is an opportunity to capitalize on this while at the same time orienting members to the unique aspects of this Board. Thoughtful and creative thinking is necessary to make these activities educationally sound and meaningful. Some ideas are presented for discussion.

- When potential Board members call requesting information about being a member of the State Board of Higher Education, there must be a plan in place for orientation and the amount of time required for it as well as an expectation that the nominee will accept the responsibility that goes with that. It should be built into the estimated amount of time required of a Board member.

- As a part of orientation and Board development, the Board might invest time developing working agreements for the Board collectively and the members individually as well as a working agreement between the Board and the Chancellor. These working agreements become the basis for on-going orientation (for new members), development, and evaluation.

- A pattern should be established where, for the first few months of a Board member’s tenure, they would meet with a member of the Chancellor’s Office staff for an hour or hour-and-a half sometime each month either in the course of the regular Board meeting (before/after?), through special meeting arrangements, or by video. The purpose would be to have them thoroughly familiar with the scope of the Board of Higher Education; the responsibilities of being a member of a public board; and to provide a forum to answer their questions. Some of the areas would be: legal (public meetings and public records laws, etc.), academic affairs, budget and finance, leadership, advocacy, etc.

- The mentoring arrangements for new Board members should continue, if the Board members feel it is useful. These assignments should not be an arrangement that is publicly published (as it is presently on the public page with Committee assignments). It might be helpful if the Board President or Chancellor worked with those who are mentors to be sure they understand the role they are to be performing and to act as a resource in the process.

- On-going development can be enhanced by monthly contacts, either by phone or in person, by the Board president and vice president. These would be opportunities for one-to-one interactions where questions could be raised, concerns expressed, and dues as to the thinking of Board members on issues and topics.
On-going Board development could be arranged around emerging topics of interest/concern in one- to one-and-a-half hour sessions of the regular meetings. Topics might include: how the state processes budget requests, articulation and transfer, etc. Specific aspects of Board responsibilities could be scheduled around the renewal with an “outside expert” on a particular aspect of boards person responsibility. The use of Study Sessions on a regular basis could also be used as a tool for Board development, discussions around topics of specific interest/concern on a particular campus, etc.

Board Campus Visitations

Although the latest Board campus visit to SOU appeared to be successful, the history of these events is littered with disappointments on the part of the campuses. Presidents and their staff work very hard to make the arrangements; Board members make a commitment to attend the events; but frequently Board members have last minute obligations or schedule conflicts that prevent them from attending. In addition, once Board members have participated in a visit to a campus, they are frequently disinclined to attend another one on that campus.

This might be an appropriate time to explore some options.

- Continue the visits as they have been done in the past: arriving on campus by early afternoon on Thursday prior to the Board day and continue through an institution-sponsored dinner.

- If the Board decides to hold six regular meetings, schedule each meeting on a campus (as they currently are). Begin Board Committee meetings on Thursday afternoon; visitation activities scheduled from 4:00 (or so) through dinner; the full Board would meet on Friday morning.

- Hold all regular Board meetings in Portland. Develop two or three “visitation teams” of the Board and schedule the team to two or three campuses per year (if there were three teams, each team would visit two campuses per year; if there were two teams, they would visit three). These could be scheduled around special events planned by the campus. The Chancellor or a Vice Chancellor would accompany the Board visitation team.

- Schedule each Board member individually to visit two - three campuses per year. The goal would be that each regular Board member would visit each campus during a four-year term. Other arrangements would need to be made for faculty and student Board members whose terms are shorter. A member of the Chancellor’s staff would accompany the Board member. This would not be a very cost- or time-efficient way to conduct the visits, but we might be able to assure that the Board members get to campuses when it is convenient for them to do so.
There are many possible combinations of these and other ideas.