

ADVISORY BOARD DEVELOPMENT “BEST PRACTICES”

➤ **Identify Purpose or Mission**

The purpose or mission of an ‘advisory board’ should be clear. Be clear about the responsibilities, activities, expectations and limits of the advisory body.

“The Board will serve as the primary resource for external stakeholder input to the operation of the School of Business. In this context, the Board will provide external monitoring of the continuous improvement process and will offer advice to the Dean in such areas as: curriculum enhancement, development of new initiatives, and overall program development.” (SUNY Oswego, School of Business, Dean’s Advisory Board)

Examples of responsibilities:

- Advising the School on issues that impact mission and strategy
- Serving as a sounding board on new programs, curriculum development and activities
- Identifying opportunities for students to interact with prospective employers
- Serving as an advocate for the School with the external community
- Providing access to other business leaders
- Assisting in acquiring resources and fund raising in support of the mission

➤ **Gain Support by Campus Leadership**

Bring the purpose or mission to the Department Chair, Dean, Provost, Vice President and President. Leadership will offer suggestions for involvement by business leaders and alumni. Leadership should also be involved in the selection/appointment process.

➤ **Selection/Appointment Process**

Board optimization is key. The selection process should be carefully developed to ensure that the goals and program expectations are met. The board should consist of a well-functioning team with clearly defined responsibilities and a good understanding of its role.

Establish a formal process for nominating and renewing the board. Consider establishing a nominating committee that annually reviews the board composition and seeks nominations to fill openings. Many boards periodically schedule a meeting of the dean and the nominating committee to discuss possible new members.

Once key individuals are identified, the dean and chair should approach the prospective member about joining the board. Typically a meeting is set up with the prospective member to discuss the purpose, roles and responsibilities of the board. If the prospective member agrees to join the board, then the university president should send a formal invitation to join the board.

➤ **Charter or Bylaws Adoption**

A formal written structure, even if brief, is important. The document should identify the mission, the officers, the criteria and term of membership, the meeting schedule and frequency, and authorization for committees.

The document may also provide a list of standing committees and responsibilities or simply define the means for establishing standing and special or ad hoc committees.

The document should be presented and reviewed by the board at least annually. Once it is approved, it can be used as part of the package given to prospective members.

➤ **Agenda Setting**

An effective agenda sets clear expectations for what needs to occur before and during a meeting. It helps team members prepare, allocates time wisely, quickly gets everyone on the same topic, and identifies when the discussion is complete. Some suggestions for developing an effective agenda include:

- Seek input from team members
- Select topics that affect the entire team
- List agenda topics as questions the team needs to answer
- Note specifically if the topic is to share, seek input or make a decision
- Estimate a realistic amount of time for each topic and state this in the agenda
- Propose a process for addressing each agenda item
- Identify who is responsible for leading each topic
- Make the first topic “review and modify agenda as needed”
- End the meeting with an opportunity for final comments or suggestions

Each agenda should include opportunities for providing value by the board, including opportunities for:

- Program Development
- Advocacy
- Publicity
- Development/Fund Raising