FOUNDATION FOR LOUISIANA STUDENTS

Process For Adding Board Members

Related Documents

Summer 2023 Assessment of UVA Board

Purpose and Use

The overall purpose of this document is to provide the Board President, Governance Committee and the Board as a whole a standardized process by which they seek to add additional board members -- either to grow current membership or to replace retiring members. This tool was developed in consultation with the Superintendent and Board President, and after discussions with each Board member. The aim of this process is to ensure that UVA has a structured way to identify, recruit, and select new board members in a way that:

1) Fills existing gaps on the board
2) Allows the full board the opportunity to nominate candidates
3) Allows multiple board members the opportunity to assess any potential candidate
4) Avoids any circumstance where the process of adding new members will feel rushed

This should be considered a "living" document. As UVA implements this process, the governance committee should consider elements of this process that have been successful, and should adjust any elements that board members feel work less well.

The steps for adding board members are enumerated below.

1. Conduct board self-assessment

Before recruiting or nominating potential board members, the Governance Committee will lead the board in conducting a self-assessment to understand what expertise current board members possess and which gaps need to be addressed or augmented. The following areas were identified during the summer, 2023 self-assessment:

- Executive / Leadership experience, especially leading nonprofits
- Government advocacy and navigation
- Strategic or crisis communications
- Fundraising
- Human resources
- Strategic finance and budgeting
- Accounting
- Legal
- Real Estate
- K-12 educator
- Direct (as a student) or indirect (as a parent) experience with virtual K-12 education
- Diversity / degree to which the board reflects the student population served

This list should be updated / refined as time goes on and as context for the organization changes. Other factors to consider are proximity to Baton Rouge (but presence in one of the areas outside of Baton Rouge where large numbers of students are clustered); parent of a current student (by-laws require a parent be a board member); and ensuring a balance of age and experience. In addition, it is important to have a succession plan for the board chair, so consideration should be made for bringing on members who could potentially play leadership roles on the board, with a long runway before assuming a leadership role.

Using these areas as a guide in conjunction with the assessment of current expertise, the Governance Committee should identify a few key areas that need to be filled through the board recruitment and selection process.

2. Generate a list of potential candidates

Informed by key areas identified as areas of need, the Governance Committee should then solicit from the full board nominees who meet those criteria. The list should be extensive -- having a large candidate pool increases the likelihood of finding board members at the end of the process. Board members should be able to easily articulate why the board member they propose meets an unmet need for the current board. The names of each candidate and where they are in the recruitment process can be tracked in A Board Bank google sheet. The google sheet can also be used to track progress with specific candidates (High/medium/low priority; Y/N to meet in person; date of meeting; Y/N invite to full board; etc). This process should happen on either an ongoing basis or at regular intervals (e.g., quarterly, in advance of a governance committee meeting).

3. Prioritize

Once a list of potential candidates has been identified, the governance committee will review the list and determine which candidates to prioritize based on the specific needs identified through the self-assessment. Using the Board Bank tool, the governance committee will score the candidate based on level of priority (column G), determine whether or not to meet the candidate in-person (column H), and determine who will initiate contact to arrange a meeting (column I). A date will then be set for the meeting and tracked in the tool (column J), and names of representatives from the school who will attend will be tracked as well (columns K -- likely the Board President, the Superintendent, and one other Governance Cte member).

4. Meet

During this meeting, the representatives from the school will share information about the school, and share that they are assembling a "pool of potential candidates to whom they can offer board seats once seats become available." School representatives should use the opportunity to assess candidate member "fit" beyond areas of expertise (e.g., level of interest, level of commitment, interpersonal dynamics, etc.). This is also an opportunity for the candidate to gain understanding of the school and its mission, and to express their interest in being considered a candidate.

5. Assess and cultivate

After meeting the candidate, the governance committee should convene to discuss the candidate. Using the Board Bank tool, the governance committee should then decide whether or not to recommend the candidate to the full board once a seat becomes available. For any candidate considered for recommendation, a plan should be made to communicate with them on an ongoing basis to assess interest level and share updates about the school. This contact should happen on a semi-regular basis (roughly every 3 months).

6. Final recommendation and board vote

Once a seat becomes available, the governance committee will determine, based on the assessment in step 1 and any changes due to board turnover, what areas of need are for the current board. The governance committee will then review the list of candidates recommended for board membership, and determine from that list the candidate(s) to be recommended to the full board. Those candidates should then be proposed to the full board for consideration, and the board should vote. Once a candidate has been voted on by the board, the candidate should be informed and asked whether or not they are interested in accepting the position. Once they accept, an onboarding process should begin.

Notes on onboarding

Effective onboarding is critical to the success of any board member. Charter school law and policy, and the frameworks for assessing school quality are complex even for experienced educators. Add to that the additional novelty for many potential board members about virtual learning, platforms used for virtual learning, how brick-and-mortar space is used, etc, and the learning curve can be quite steep. A board member who doesn't understand at least the basics will be limited in what they can contribute, and it is incumbent upon the board and the organization as a whole to provide resources that allow new board members context on the organization in a way that accelerates their learning.

It is recommended that at a minimum, the board provides the following:

- Mission, vision, and values of the school
- A narrative history of the school
- Performance history of the school (letter grades, graduation rates, performance on state assessments, etc) and context for this performance (relative to other schools, how performance fits within state grade letter framework, etc)
- Charter policy in Louisiana (e.g., bulletin 126)
- Any current strategic plan or plan under development, including organizational priorities and goals
- School budgets -- current and past

- Any other data that is unique to the school

These can be provided in written form (a “binder”), through orientation meetings with current and past board members and staff, and/or board retreats. In addition, board members should be provided a tour of brick-and-mortar facilities where they can observe learning in action and meet key staff.