

Director's Roles & Responsibilities at College & University Clubs

by
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College and university clubs that are directly associated with a specific institution, and housed on or near the campus of that institution, have some unique characteristics.

Some of the similarities, and differences between other like clubs, can be associated with specific university policy and may force unpaid volunteer leaders into decisions that have substantial impact on the club. This fact places directors of these clubs in a delicate role that attempts to balance the needs of the club with the requirements of the institution.

When we examine the organizational structure of college and university clubs we find that:

1. Some clubs have 501 C7 non-profit tax status while others are 501 C3 non-profit charitable organizations. Charitable organizations may provide more flexibility in fundraising and other aspects of operating.

2. Certain clubs are subsidized by the university and subject to the state funding issues that arise from year to year. Others may receive an endowment that becomes a stable source of partial funding. Others still may operate and are able to break even on dues and other revenues independent of outside funding.

3. Club boards may include just faculty and administrators, while others may also include alumni and even staff members. In some cases each group – alumni, administrators, faculty and staff independently nominate directors to serve on the club board. This process can supply a variety of individuals with different backgrounds to the role of governing the club.

4. Clubs may be affected differently by the rules and policies of the college or university. That affect may be the result of the mix of members within the club. A change in the reimbursement of entertainment for administrators and faculty by the college or university, as an example, may be felt less by a club with a greater percentage of revenue generated by alumni members that are not affected by the university policy than with a club that has mostly faculty and administrators as members.

These are just some of the issues that can make college and university clubs somewhat different from the standard city or country club.

Before we address issues specific affecting college and university club boards we need place in context the state of the industry. Recently the Association for College and University Clubs (ACUC) approached the Club Managers Association of America

(CMAA) about managing the ACUC. Today CMAA is assisting the ACUC in all aspects of running the association and introducing member clubs to successful operating strategies that can impact every member club.

For years CMAA and its associated services area Premier Club Services (PCS) have been developing resource materials for the club industry. ACUC's new association with CMAA has provided a vehicle to promote the use of much of this club specific material to ACUC member clubs. Today about 20% of the present managers and COO's of the ACUC clubs are members of CMAA. Many of these professionals have probably introduced some of this material to their club organization. Hopefully the ACUC's association with CMAA can have an expanded positive affect on clubs that presently do not have CMAA member managers.



One such resource item developed by PCS is a package of materials addressing club governance issues. It includes The Director's Guide for Understanding Club Governance, The Governance Checklist and the Board Resource Manual. The 'Director's Guide' identifies a series of best practices in club governance. The 'Checklist' is a vehicle for club boards to complete a self audit and compare how their board operates to recommended governance policies. The 'Resource Manual' is a prototype board orientation piece to help prepare new directors for their role in the governance process.

The governance resource package was targeted at the traditional non-profit private club. However, most of the material will have real value to college and university based clubs. Although there are some differences, many of the governance issues in college and university clubs mirror those concerns within the traditional private club. In fact, because of the uniqueness of ACUC clubs, many of the suggested governance practices may be just as important.

Let's examine just a few of the many governance practices suggested in the Director's Guide that would be of benefit to college and university club boards.

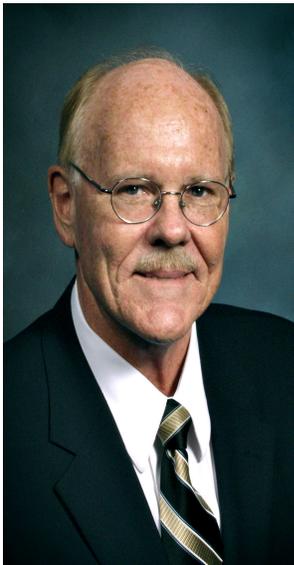
- 1. Establish a governance policy book on how the Board will function. Use the Director's Guide as a model when selecting the operating procedures of the Board. Distribute the final product to all Board nominees. Ask each nominee to agree to abide by the policies before accepting the nomination to the Board.**
- 2. Hold a comprehensive new 'Board Member Orientation' at the beginning of the year. Use the Resource Manual as a guide for development of the orientation**

package. The orientation will insure that all new board members will have the information necessary to make quality decisions.

3. Complete a strategic plan and revisit the plan annually. Every organization must have a clear vision of what they are and where they are going. A strategic plan is a road map to insure that positive progress can be made toward agreed upon goals. A strategic plan is a living document that must be revisited regularly as the club will be continually affected by both internal and external factors.

4. Set goals and objectives at the beginning of the year for the Board and not just the management. At the end of the year evaluate the performance of the Board against the stated goals and objectives. Such a system will encourage the Board to be proactive to issues rather than just reactive.

These are just some of the governance issues that are addressed in the governance materials available through PCS. Managers and COO's of college and university clubs are encouraged to introduce their Boards to these materials. We are sure that unpaid volunteer leaders of college and university clubs will benefit from the exposure to these best practices.



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