

## EVALUATION OF PRESIDENTS/COMMISSIONER -- POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Board of Governors for Higher Education  
State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

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## TYPES OF EVALUATIONS

Evaluations of the presidents of public institutions of higher education and the commissioner of higher education are of two types: contract evaluations and annual evaluations.

Each president and the commissioner shall have the opportunity for a thorough evaluation at least once prior to contract renewal. Contract evaluations shall provide the Board with the information necessary to make decisions about contract renewal, length of contract, special conditions of contract, and/or salary, and shall provide the president/commissioner with the opportunity to outline future long-term agendas.

Interim performance evaluations shall be conducted annually and shall have as the central purpose providing the president/commissioner and the Board with a forum for mutually assessing progress on the agreed-upon objectives of the past year and for determining or modifying future objectives.

## PURPOSES OF EVALUATIONS

The evaluations of the presidents and the commissioner should be made in the context of the missions of their respective institutions/agency. These missions differ; therefore, it should be expected that the roles and the performances of the presidents/commissioner will be different. The internal campus/office environment, rooted in the shared governance model, and the external environment must also be taken into account; for instance, in a year during which budgets have been drastically reduced (or dramatically raised) expectancies should be modified.

Perspective of the Board

The purpose of the evaluation is to enable the president/commissioner and the Board to have a clear, up-to-date understanding of their relationship. The process of evaluation permits candid dialogue through a formal process. The result should be improved understanding and should lead to productive change.

During a given period of time there may be instances when the president/commissioner and Board relationship are stressed. For this very reason, it is important that formal evaluation not

be viewed in the light of short-term crises, but rather in terms of performance over an extended period of time.

Criteria for evaluations should be rooted in three basic ideas:

1. How has the president/commissioner performed against agreed-upon objectives?
2. What are the objectives and expectations for the future?
3. Based upon performance to date, does the president/commissioner appear to have the ability to meet the objectives and expectations for the future?

The evaluation should provide necessary information to the Board for making decisions about contracts and/or salary.

The Board will assign to the Personnel Committee the responsibility for oversight of the president/commissioner evaluation process, except in those cases where the full Board decides to act as the Personnel Committee.

#### Perspective of the President/Commissioner

Performance should be evaluated in relation to what the president/commissioner was expected to do. The evaluation process enables a president/commissioner to critique his/her own performance. Often, for example, a president is not as free to run the institution as the Board would wish; institutional governance mechanisms are complex, often dispersed, and have individual histories.

The president/commissioner should be assured that the Board evaluation makes distinctions between performance and ability. It also is important that the Board not confuse presidential/commissioner performance with the condition of the institution/agency. The correlation is not always present given the extraordinary numbers of variables operating in higher education.

A president/commissioner should be able to use the evaluation process for the following purposes:

- W Assess success against the Board expectations and against own expectations,
- W Identify changes in expectations or initial assumptions,
- W Provide statements about issues and problems,
- W Offer suggestions for the future to address issues and problems, and
- W Explore ways to improve president or commissioner/Board relationships and campus/office relationships.

## THE MANAGEMENT LETTER

The management letter should be prepared by the beginning of the contract period (July 1<sup>st</sup>) and be updated annually. Each year the president/commissioner will be asked to reflect on his/her achievements of the past year, to indicate future objectives, and to review in detail items of particular interest or concern. The management letter is central to the dialogue with the Board in completing the formal evaluation.

In terms of format, the management letter should be a readable, concise (twenty pages or less) statement of past accomplishments and shortcomings, and a projection of what is to be effectuated in the future. The future objectives should be related to the mission of the institution/agency; should be clearly delineated and very specific; and should include projected outcomes and indicators of success in terms of outcome measures. The objectives are not expected to encompass all the responsibilities of a president/commissioner, but rather should address those major items targeted for the future. The president/commissioner should respond to each one of the Board of Governors' priorities as well as key institutional priorities.

After an initial review of the management letter, the Personnel Committee, in consultation with the president/commissioner, may request that certain items be added, deleted or modified. Once the agreed-upon changes are made, an amended management letter will be submitted. This management letter will serve as the basis of the annual evaluation and as one component of the contract evaluation.

## PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION

In the evaluation of presidents/commissioner, the following steps will be taken.

### Contract Renewal Evaluation

1. Contract renewal evaluations shall be completed at least six months prior to the established contract renewal date.
2. The evaluation (for purposes of contract renewal) shall include:
  - a. The Personnel Committee will establish a schedule and procedures for evaluation.
  - b. The Personnel Committee will meet with the President/Commissioner to review the management letter and self-assessment.
  - c. The self-assessment will be a written narrative (not to exceed 10 pages) in which the President/Commissioner briefly responds to past performance in each category of the evaluation criteria in 4.4 of this policy.
  - d. For contract evaluations, additional views of the presidents or commissioner may be solicited by the Personnel Committee, either orally or in writing, regarding relevant issues. The Committee will also gather and review other relevant materials germane to the evaluation.

- e. The Personnel Committee should utilize only specifically solicited reactions on the president's performance from members of the college/university community. Chairs of Committees of the Board of Governors shall be solicited for reactions. The Commissioner will submit his written reaction to the presidents' performance and the presidents will submit written reactions to the Commissioner's performance.
- f. For presidential evaluations, a consultant can be hired, if the Personnel Committee so desires and approves.

In such cases a consultant(s) having no ties to the institution/agency and free of conflict of interest will be selected by the Personnel Committee. The Commissioner will advise or assist the consultant(s) in the evaluation process. The consultant(s) will conduct a two-day, on-site visit early in the fall semester which would include conferences with the president, review of relevant documents, interviews and meetings with members of the educational community, and a careful assessment of the president's leadership. This process would be conducted in a confidential manner and not be open to the public. The consultant's report will be forwarded to the president, the Board chair, the chair of the Personnel Committee and Commissioner within 30 days following the on-site visit.

- g. The final evaluation report will be completed by the Personnel Committee and will incorporate the consultant's report, if a consultant was utilized. The president/commissioner will receive an advance copy of the evaluation report and have (ten) 10 days to submit a written response prior to a meeting with the committee. The Personnel Committee will then forward its recommendation about contract renewal, length of contract, special conditions of contract and salary to the full Board for its consideration.

### Annual Evaluation

- 1. Interim evaluations for other than contract renewal purposes shall be conducted annually.
- 2. Annual evaluation shall include:
  - a. The President and the Commissioner will update the management letter and forward it to the Board.
  - b. The management letter should be used by the Board as a central instrument for the annual review.

A review of the president's/commissioner's management letter will be conducted by the Personnel Committee at the beginning of the academic year in an interview with the president/commissioner. For the presidents' evaluations, the advice of the commissioner will be solicited.

- c. If deemed necessary, a second review will be held after mid-year to determine progress and to discuss problems.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Since the original version of the Evaluation of *Presidents/Commissioner – Policy and Procedures*, these evaluation criteria have been used to focus attention on major areas that deserve consideration. Even though the process has evolved from a single to multi-year one with greater emphasis on institutional accomplishments over those years, this list of criteria still provides some specific expectations for the president/commissioner in his/her leadership role that should enter into the evaluation.

### A. PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES

1. Evidence of knowledge and understanding of educational, managerial, and governance principles and issues.
2. Capacity for motivating individuals and groups.
3. Receptivity to new ideas or arguments, and the ability to modify management approaches to reach a goal.
4. Ability to make decisions in critical situations, to handle crises, and to surmount personal criticism.
5. Stability of performance, tendency to follow through with a problem until resolved or with a project until implemented.
6. Concern for others and appreciation for their work; sensitivity to individuals affected by decisions.

### B. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

1. Ability to develop and supervise an appropriate administrative organization.
2. Ability to select strong staff associates, to delegate responsibilities to them, to evaluate them, and to make personnel changes when necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the institution/agency.
3. Ability to identify and analyze issues and problems, to seek imaginative ways to resolve issues and problems, and to assume responsibility for decisions.
4. Ability to develop and implement long-range plans for the institution/system.
5. Ability to initiate new ideas, to incorporate the ideas of others in decision-making, and to involve appropriate individuals and groups in support of decisions and in their implementation.
6. Ability to develop and maintain an adequate, effective personnel system which demonstrates commitment to affirmative action policies and procedures.

C. FISCAL MANAGEMENT

1. Evidence of sound fiscal management.
2. Ability to review and analyze budgets of the institution/system, to present the budgets, and to make appropriate recommendation to the Office of Higher Education and the Board of Governors.
3. Ability to attract funds for the institution/system.
4. Evidence of effective, fiscally sound auxiliary enterprise management.

D. ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

1. Awareness of educational ideas, trends, and innovations.
2. Existence of well-developed goals, objectives and priorities.
3. Existence of a program review procedure designed to serve as a basis for staff allocation and budgetary support, to evaluate the quality of instruction, and to assist in the implementation of the institution's/agency's goals, objectives and priorities.
4. Ability to stimulate curricular development in response to student and societal interests and needs.
5. Ability to relate to faculty in an appropriate professional manner.

E. STUDENT AFFAIRS

1. Ability to relate to students in an appropriate professional manner.
2. Evidence of formal and informal mechanisms for involving students in decision-making.
3. Quality of the recruitment, admission, counseling, and placement programs of the institution and of the personnel involved in these activities.
4. Evidence of effective student services programs, e.g., student center, student government, residence halls.
5. Evidence of sensitivity on the part of management to individual differences and of tolerance of and respect for such differences.

F. RELATIONSHIP TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

1. Ability to administer Board policies and to carry out duties assigned by the Board.
2. Ability and willingness to address the priority issues of the Board, and to contribute significantly to outcomes in these areas, and to report progress periodically against clearly defined outcome measures as part of the President's

Report at regular Board meetings.

3. Effectiveness in keeping the Board informed of all relevant issues affecting or having bearing on managerial policies.
4. Ability to provide leadership, and to identify for the Board problems confronting the institution, to assess alternative solutions, and to recommend appropriate actions.

G. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

1. Ability to relate to and communicate with the community at large.
2. Evidence of an active alumni program.
3. Skills in meeting the social obligations of the presidency/commissionership.
4. Ability to work collaboratively with the other presidents/institutions and the commissioner/office.
5. Ability to relate to legislators, the governor's office, other state and federal agencies, and the congressional delegation on matters affecting the institution/agency.
6. Effectiveness in representing the institution/system to its various other publics.