

Planning Document Requirements for Departments Requesting to Form Boards of Visitors

In order to ensure that departments have thought through the opportunities and challenges associated with formal boards of visitors, we are asking that all departments proposing to form boards develop a planning document. Such a document will help departments to clarify the reasons for establishing a board. They also will help to develop well-run boards by considering and developing plans for how the board would be formed and managed. Such plans need not be articulated in minute detail, but should include discussion of the following elements:

Basics

- ❖ The steps that you have taken to consult with department faculty and staff, your development director, and the Dean of Letters & Science, including names of people with whom you have spoken and their response to your idea.
- ❖ The proposed board's intended purpose. Please remember that a board of visitors is a long-term vehicle to engage alumni and friends of the university. It also can be an important means to cultivate and steward top prospects and donors. It is not a fund-raising device that will increase discretionary funding for the department in the short-run.
- ❖ The population from which board members will be drawn and how members will be selected. You should know whether your department has sufficient numbers of highly successful alumni to support a board of 12-20 people (not all invitees will accept membership), and whether these alumni are financially supportive of the UW and/or your department specifically?
- ❖ Whether the faculty and staff who will work with a departmental board understand its purpose and will commit to actively supporting board activities. This is particularly important in regard to the people who will chair the department in the coming years.
- ❖ The thoughts and recommendations of your UW Foundation development director regarding creation of a board for your department.

Staffing and Logistical Matters

Neither the college nor the foundation can assume responsibility for the staffing and logistical needs related to departmental boards of visitors. Departments hold responsibility for arrangements such as agenda planning, correspondence, requests from board members, lodging and meeting room reservations, parking, meals, refreshments, and/or transportation. Your planning document should include discussion of the following issues:

- ❖ The availability and roles of the department chair, supporting faculty or administrator, and staff to manage logistics and correspondence.

- ❖ The availability and role of your development director to work with board members and meetings.
- ❖ Identification of responsibility for logistics management (who handles hotel reservations, meeting room reservations, parking, meal, and other matters). Identification of the person responsible for taking minutes at board meetings and circulating minutes to members.
- ❖ Your plan for continuity between your department and the board when department leadership changes.
- ❖ How you will pay for the range of expenses, from mailings to meals and parking, for board meetings.
- ❖ A plan for engaging and interacting with board members between meetings. Effective board relations require a range of strategies for cultivation, engagement, and reinforcement; it is much more than a twice-a-year event.
- ❖ Your department's recent alumni and/or development initiatives, and how they will inform your efforts to establish a viable board. (Please provide examples.)

Structuring a board

Boards of visitors function better if there is a clear structure and plan from the outset. Your planning document should provide your preliminary thoughts about:

- ❖ How you will solidify the structure for the board and board meetings during the initial year or so. Do you envision having a chair for your board and, if so, how will that chair be named? Will board members have set terms and, if so, how will those terms be identified? How often will your board meet and when? How will new board members be identified and invited to join the board?
- ❖ Your plan for developing a mission statement and, if desired, by-laws.
- ❖ Your plan for responding to or following up on board advice, solicited and unsolicited.
- ❖ Ways that the chair, faculty and department staff might accommodate potential board interest in creating and implementing "action plans" as the board becomes more established?