

The Governance Quiz

Augsburg University Board of Regents

1. An Augsburg donor contacts you via e-mail and states that his nephew's daughter was not accepted to Augsburg though he knows of several students whose high school achievements were far less than this nephew's daughter and who had been accepted to Augsburg this year. He asks you to "look into the situation." Your next move is to:
 - a. Reply to the e-mail to tell your friend that you will indeed look into the situation.
 - b. Forward the e-mail to the Admissions Office and ask them for an explanation about this application.
 - c. Forward the e-mail to the President.
 - d. Bring up the request at the next Academic Affairs Committee meeting.
2. A small group of faculty calls and asks to meet with you to discuss their concerns about the President of Augsburg. They ask that their request remain confidential at this time until they have an opportunity to share with you some "very sensitive" information that they claim is reliable and includes documentation. You:
 - a. Tell them to consult the Whistleblower Policy and take the steps it outlines.
 - b. Agree to meet with them since you cannot ignore such a serious request.
 - c. Tell them to send you their documentation in the mail.
 - d. Call the Board Chair to report the request and ask for guidance.
3. A staff member approaches you between board meetings while you are on campus and asks you to review their report to the upcoming board meeting. You:
 - a. Tell them it's inappropriate for a Board member to review staff work except at the request of the President.
 - b. Review the report and give him/her the feedback they seek.
 - c. Review the report and give him/her the feedback they seek while being clear that your feedback is not "direction."
 - d. Read the report and tell them you'd prefer to give your feedback to the President.
4. All Regents receive a signed letter from parents of an Augsburg student who are angry about treatment of their son after his room in one of the residences was searched for drugs based on anonymous information given to Public Safety. The search yielded no drugs and was conducted when the student was not in the room. No further action was taken by Public Safety. The VP of Student Affairs met with the student and parents and apologized for the error. The parents want more to be done. You:
 - a. Ignore the letter. If it was sent to all Regents, someone else will deal with it.

- b. Hand the letter to the President at the next board meeting so he knows you received it.
 - c. Bring up the letter at the next Student Affairs Committee meeting.
 - d. Contact the VP of Student Affairs to see what else can be done to please these parents.
5. As the University looks at taking on debt to finance the building of the CSBR, you see information about one degree program you have always thought was not worth the University's continued nurturing and financial investment. You:
- a. Contact the President and suggest he discontinue this program.
 - b. Call the Provost for more information about the ROI of this program – after all, your impression of it could be wrong.
 - c. Raise a question about this program at either the next Academic Affairs or Finance Committee meeting.
 - d. Remain silent – this is digging into too much detail for a Regent.
6. The Faculty recommends that a prominent author be awarded an honorary degree at next year's Commencement. One of the Regents mentions a YouTube video of this author talking about how his experiences at a Lutheran University years ago had inspired him to become an atheist. You:
- a. Vote against the honorary degree.
 - b. Speak up at the board meeting and try to convince your fellow Regents not to approve the degree.
 - c. Remain silent – others have probably vetted the honorary degrees more than you have.
 - d. Get a chuckle out of the whole situation – aren't human beings interesting animals?
7. The President's Review Subcommittee reports to the board in executive session after their formal review and doesn't mention the feedback to the President that you put in your review that you are sure the President needs to get to be more effective. You:
- a. Tell him about it yourself after the meeting.
 - b. Consult with the Vice Chair who conducted the review and ask him/her to go back and add your feedback.
 - c. Remain silent – you had your chance to give input, and the Subcommittee used its judgment about what to include in the review.
 - d. Give the President constructive feedback in the moment when you see him do the thing that concerned you again.

8. At an alumni event, several recent graduates, who had been members of various Augsburg athletic teams, approach you and voice the complaint that the Augsburg athletics program is not receiving adequate funds to build a first-rate athletic program and that it doesn't allow its athletes sufficient practice time. You:
 - a. Tell them that you'll check it out and get back to them after you've gathered the facts.
 - b. Suggest they discuss their concern with the Athletic Director.
 - c. Suggest they discuss their concern with the President.
 - d. Bring up their concern at the next board meeting.

9. You are strongly opposed to the compensation increase being proposed for the President, and you have a strong bias that Presidents make too much money compared to the rest of the faculty and staff. The rest of the Board seems to be blithely going along with the proposed increase and is heading for a vote. You:
 - a. Vote against the increase.
 - b. Speak out against the increase even if you think you will lose and it will go through.
 - c. Tell the Board Chair after the meeting how you feel since it wouldn't do any good to be the only opposing voice in the meeting.
 - d. Vote for the increase to keep the board's action unanimous regarding the President's compensation.

10. The Augsburg Theatre Arts Department announces its fall season including a production of *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*. Several Regents receive e-mails, phone calls, and letters from angry parents of students and alumni about how this play mocks the traditions and mission of the University and demanding the Regents take action. The President seems unconcerned at a board meeting. You:
 - a. Raise the issue again in the meeting and suggest to the President that ignoring this issue could cost the University.
 - b. Count on the President's judgment of the situation.
 - c. Raise the issue again off-line on a break in the meeting and ask the President to take this more seriously.
 - d. Report your concern to the Board Chair.

Answer key:

1. c.
2. a. or d.
3. c.
4. a. or c.
5. b. or c.
6. a. b. c. or d.
7. c. or d.
8. b. or c.
9. a. or b.
10. b. or d.

Summary

- It's always in order to seek out the Board Chair for guidance.
- You can say anything you want to the President who knows what to do with Board input, but don't expect him to take direction from you. Only the Board as a whole can give direction to the President.
- The President wants you to feel free to talk with the staff of the University, but you must not give them direction. Keep in mind that "just a suggestion" from a Regent may well sound like direction to a member of the staff.
- If you respond in any way—even to say "I'll get back to you" —to someone from outside the University, you will send the signal that it is OK to approach a Regent on the issue at hand. You should forward written messages directly to the President. If approached in person, tell the person asking you to deal with something that they should contact the President.
- If you are approached with concerns by staff or faculty, suggest the person take their concerns to the President, and then inform the President yourself. If the concern is about the President, suggest the person take their concerns to the Board Chair, and then inform the Board Chair yourself.
- If you have questions or concerns in your role as a Regent, bring them up in the proper committee or Board meeting. Bringing them up after the meeting doesn't give your issues a chance to be properly vetted through our governance process.