

ASSUMING THE TRUSTEESHIP

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Boards of trustees, or other similarly titled entities, oversee most public institutions of higher education. They are entrusted with the ultimate authority to make policy decisions for the nation's colleges and universities yet little is known about how boards learn and are trained to govern.¹ The lack of scholarship and understanding in this area does not negate the importance of governance to the welfare of higher education institutions and ultimately student representation, experiences, and outcomes.

For her dissertation, Pullias Center for Higher Education researcher, Raquel Rall, studied the differences in socialization practices for trustees on three different public higher education system boards. Rall's research is one of the first research studies to investigate the interconnectivity of board socialization and decision making. She demarcated the ways in which self- and collective-efficacy are shaped by socialization and then in turn shape board decision making. Differences in trustee socialization by board member type—layman, student, or faculty trustee—were evident. The findings of this qualitative inquiry put forward provocative implications for research on public boards of higher education.

Board learning and preparation is vital. As a second term trustee shared, “One of the most important things for [trustees] to begin to understand is what their role is as a [trustee]. And we do cover those things. We talk about that and the [board] chair comes in to discuss how do you determine what you know, what you should be doing, and what is overreaching. And that is really very, that is probably the most important thing that they need to understand because in the system, we give a lot autonomy ... it is very important that they understand that they are to set broad policy, that they are to look at big picture types of thingsThey really need to understand what their role is”

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learning governor-appointed systems
 voting powers decision making
 public boards of higher education
 socialization trustees directors
 institutions policy actors
 governance orientation term faculty students
 preparation visitors laymen
 regents



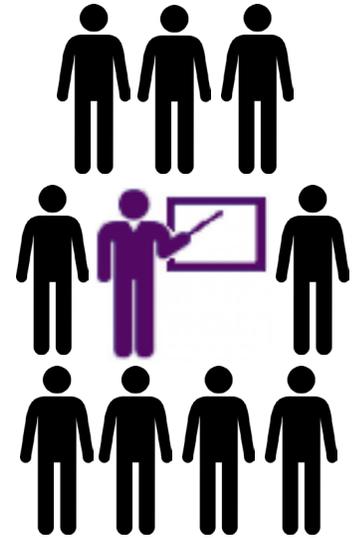
80%
 OF U.S. STUDENTS
 GO TO PUBLIC
 COLLEGES AND
 UNIVERSITIES
 THAT ARE
 GOVERNED BY
 SYSTEMS

6 YEARS

average term of
 layman trustee

1 YEAR

average term of
 faculty/student
 trustee



**1-2 MEMBERS WHO SERVE
 ON A PUBLIC BOARD ARE
 FACULTY AND STUDENTS**

(Boards range from 9-23 members)

length of time to get accustomed
 to role of trustee



365+ days

length of formal board training



1-2 days