Campus Climate, Free Speech, Inclusion, and Civility

2018 Massachusetts Trustees Conference

Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

March 1, 2018

ASSOCIATION OF
GOVERNING BOARDS
OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Overview

- Context for Boards

- Context for Massachusetts institutions

- Origins of the AGB statements

- Understanding key terms

- Eight recommendations for institutional leaders

- Panel Discussion

National Context

Consider These Actual Events:

- More than 1,000 demonstrators march through a campus in support of racial equity and social justice, catalyzed by a police shooting of a young African-American off campus

- A student gains national attention while carrying a mattress with her on campus every day to protest a university's failure to expel another student she accused of sexually assaulting her

- A university offers gender-free housing and provides a resource center for LGBT students, while another denies housing to a transgender student on religious grounds

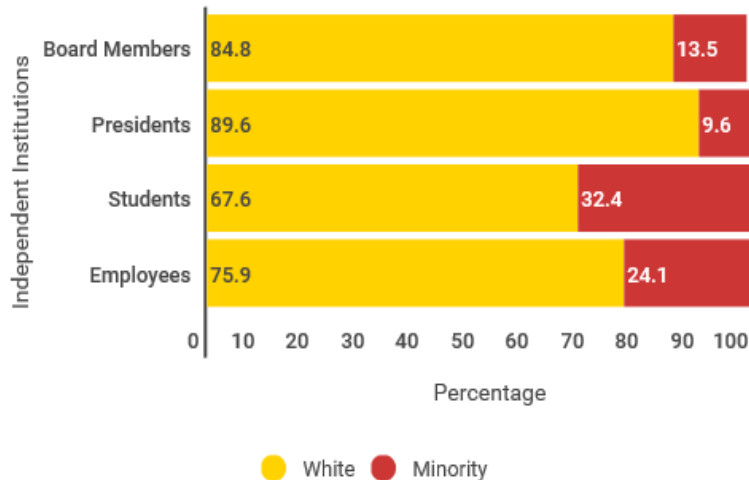# National Context

Consider These Actual Events:

- Racist speech is spray painted on benches and a fence at Salem State
- Salem State shutters art exhibit after criticism from students
- Bunker Hill Community College overturns policy that banned distribution of copies of the Constitution
- UMass sued claiming that its policy on demonstrations is unconstitutional restriction on free speech and peaceful assembly
- Racial slurs written in residence hall at Framingham State

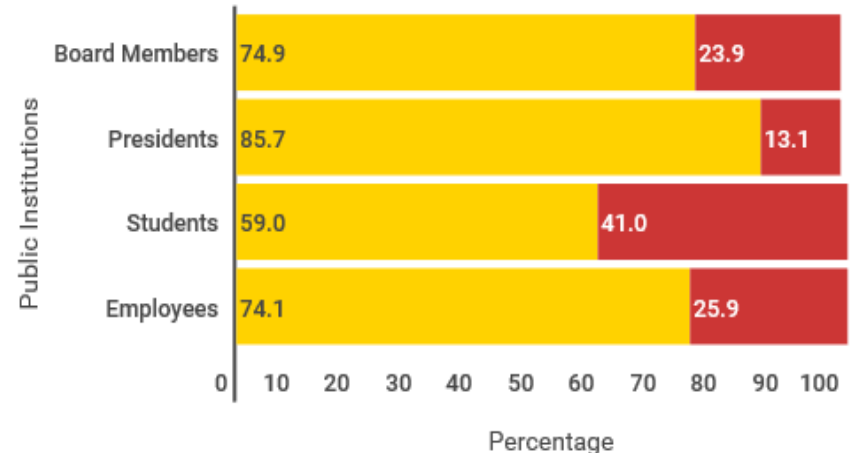# National Context: Board Diversity Vs. Campus Diversity

Independent

Public

Race and Ethnicity on College Campuses

Independent Institutions	White	Minority
Board Members	84.8	13.5
Presidents	89.6	9.6
Students	67.6	32.4
Employees	75.9	24.1

Percentage

● White ● Minority

Race and Ethnicity on College Campuses

Public Institutions	White	Minority
Board Members	74.9	23.9
Presidents	85.7	13.1
Students	59.0	41.0
Employees	74.1	25.9

Percentage

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Why do diversity, inclusion, and civility matter to college and university boards?

- Boards as fiduciaries are responsible for overseeing strategic issues – including campus climate, diversity, and inclusion - facing their campuses

- Guiding principles of American higher education:
  - Academic freedom
  - Freedom of expression
  - Institutional autonomy
  - Shared governance

Understanding Key Terms

Terms provided throughout the report are intended to offer basic framing and facilitate a discussion amongst governing boards about how their institution(s) defines and uses these terms. This list is not intended to be finite or exhaustive.

Diversity includes:

- Race
- Gender
- Gender identity and expression
- Ethnicity
- National origin
- Religion
- Sexual orientation

- Age
- Socio-economic background
- Physical ability and disability
- Neurodiversity
- Student and faculty intellectual and political beliefs

Understanding Key Terms

Inclusion…

- Recognizes and embraces **<u>a sense of ownership in the institution and a place of belonging for all</u>**

- Requires **sustained and intentional** institutional commitment and action

- **Is active** and reflects the continuing character of a campus

- Is manifested by the ideas, policies, actions, and **shared culture** of its governing body, chief executive, administration, faculty, students, alumni, and local community.

- Identifies that **campus safety is fundamental.** Being "safe" does not mean being shielded from potentially challenging ideas and beliefs; rather, individuals should have the right to be safe from physical or emotional harm or harassment in their expression

Understanding Key Terms

Freedom of Expression…

- Is both an American **constitutional right** and a principle that is central to an **open and engaged institution** of learning.

- Must be established by **meaningful and consistent policies** and remedies for its infringement, or there is no freedom.
  Time, place, and manner restrictions

- Includes tolerance—the willingness to **permit the free expression** of ideas, beliefs, and values that may be at odds with your own.

Understanding Key Terms

Freedom of Expression…

- Safe space

- Trigger warnings

- Microaggressions

Eight Recommendations for Institutional Leadership

The statement encourages boards and institutional leaders to consider the following recommendations in order to be confident that policies are in place to ensure a healthy, vibrant, and safe campus community.

Eight Recommendations for Institutional Leadership

1. An institutional or system governing board should **support the CEO** with trust, confidence, and the delegation of authority necessary to make critical and timely decisions consistent with institutional and system policy.

2. Chief executives should be **fully transparent and collaborative** with the governing board on campus climate issues.

"Chief executives should advise the board on those instances when efforts to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and free and open discourse have been SUCCESSFUL and when they have been UNSUCCESFUL."

Eight Recommendations for Institutional Leadership

3. Boards should **periodically review campus climate policies** and ensure that those policies are up-to-date and consistent with institutional mission and relevant laws and regulations.

4. Boards should **exercise their fiduciary duty of care** by ensuring that the institution has allocated appropriate resources to address campus climate needs.

"The governance practice of evaluating resource deployment should **NOT BE SIMPLY REACTIVE**, but rather should be timely and **PROACTIVE** while considering both short-term and long-term needs."

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Eight Recommendations for Institutional Leadership

5. Governing boards should ensure the implementation of **an effective communication plan and receive regular updates** from the chief executive and other administrators who are responsible for the implementation of campus and system policies regarding campus climate.

6. Governing boards should **actively lead in addressing campus climate** issues through effective governance practices that are proactive, responsive, and adaptive.

"Transparency and consistency, through explanation and example, **breeds trust"**

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Eight Recommendations for Institutional Leadership

7.   Governing boards, as a collective body, should **seek direct engagement** with students, faculty, staff, alumni, local communities, and other stakeholders to be certain that they have an understanding of their concerns and current priorities

8.   Chief executives should **demonstrate compliance** with governing board policy and governance expectations on diversity and inclusion and show leadership in staff development.

"The focus must be not only on '**college-ready students,**' but also on '**student-ready colleges.**'"

Panel Discussion