

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*The Honorable
Charles H. Casey, Chair
Board of Regents*

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January 18, 1991

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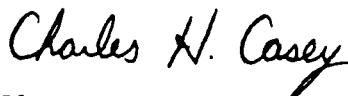
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you, on behalf of the Board of Regents, for taking the time on January 16 to meet with the committee assessing the Board's performance. Dr. Enarson and the other committee members have made clear that they gained extraordinary insight from the feedback that you provided.

Enclosed is the final report of the committee. The recommendations contained in the report were the basis for a thoughtful and thorough discussion at a retreat attended by most of the Board members last Saturday. I will be summarizing that discussion at the March 8 meeting of the Board of Regents.

Again, I thank you for your assistance. Your counsel and advice is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Charles H. Casey
Chair

CHC/kff

Enclosure

cc: Members of the Board of Regents
President Nils Hasselmo
Senior Vice President Len Kuhi

**ASSESSMENT OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**

**An Independent Report by the
Board Assessment Committee**

Dr. Harold L. Enarson, Chair * Dr. Robert L. Heller
Dr. Jean L. Harris (M.D.) * Ms. Margaret Langfeld

Respectfully submitted to
Charles Casey, Chair
Board of Regents

February 7, 1991

Introduction

As stated in the introduction to the Process for Assessment of the Board of Regents, University of Minnesota, "To remain effective, to adapt, to change, and to improve, a governing board must periodically review and assess its own performance."

It is now standard practice in higher education to assess the performance of students, faculty, and academic administrators. It is, however, uncommon for governing boards to assess their own performance in a thorough and systematic fashion.

The reasons for the reticence of governing boards to submit themselves to critical self-examination and external review are obvious. To ask the many constituencies and "regent watchers" "How are we doing?" is risky business.

The governing board that undertakes such a bold initiative may reap an unexpected harvest of criticism. If the assessment proves to be excessively critical, even unfair, the governing board becomes the victim of its own good intentions.

We commend the Board of Regents, and Chairman Casey in particular, for having the courage and self-discipline to put in place an assessment of its own performance. We also commend the Board and its able executive director, Barbara Muesing, for their careful structuring of the inquiry.

Although this is not the first self-assessment initiated by the Board of Regents, it is by far the most complete and comprehensive to date. The assessment is in three parts.

First, as noted in the one-page Process statement, the Board has made use of the self-assessment questionnaire developed by the Association of Governing Boards (AGB), which was completed by Board members. The self-assessment was supplied to the committee as a matter of information only.

The Board also provided the committee with the recommendations on governance submitted December 1, 1988 by the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission (Blue Ribbon Commission).

Third, the Board specified that the criteria employed in the assessment were to be those developed by AGB and modified to address the recommendations on governance of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission. These criteria were used by the committee in its interviews with university constituencies.

Important questions in any such assessment are, of course, who is to conduct the assessment and who is to receive the assessment. The entire assignment could have been conducted in-house. The Board chose instead to rely on a special committee of outsiders independent of the university. The committee is composed of the following persons:

- * Dr. Harold L. Enarson, president emeritus, The Ohio State University; formerly a senior adviser on governance to the Blue Ribbon Commission;
- * Dr. Robert L. Heller, chancellor emeritus, the University of Minnesota-Duluth;
- * Dr. Jean L. Harris (M.D.), president and C.E.O., Ramsey Foundation; and
- * Ms. Margaret Langfeld, Anoka County Commissioner.

It is our clear and explicit understanding that this report in its entirety is to be submitted through the chair to the Board in the near future for their review at a retreat -- and this without clearance or prior review by any officer of the university or member of the Board. This is a responsibility and a trust which our committee does not take lightly.

Workplan

The office of the Board of Regents supplied the committee in advance of the meeting with the documents and material for its review. These included the AGB self-study criteria and the regents' response to the questionnaire, by-laws of the regents, report to the Governor of the Blue Ribbon Commission, 1988 (with report of the Senior Advisers on governance), summary of the Board of Regents' actions in response to the report of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission, and related materials.

The general schedule of interviews was developed by Barbara Muesing in consultation with the chair of the Board Assessment Committee. It was agreed that the committee would meet for interviews on the Twin Cities campus for two days, and then draft a report subsequent to the meeting. Accordingly, the Board Assessment Committee convened January 16 at Morrill Hall for its organizational meeting, after which it conducted hour-long interviews with representatives of various groups -- students, faculty,

alumni, civil servants, and the president's cabinet -- followed by a dinner meeting with several regents emeriti.

Reconvening on the morning of January 17 at 7:30 a.m., the committee met with representatives from the Alumni Association and the Foundation Board, the academic staff, and the civil service staff, after which it had a brief courtesy meeting with Regent Casey.

Following these interviews, the committee reached general agreement on its observations and conclusions, these to be refined in a final review of a draft to be circulated.

We would note for future reference one omission in our workplan. Regent Casey had rightly suggested interviews with the legislative leadership. The two days we had allocated for the task did not allow time to go off campus for separate interviews.

We recommend that at such time another self-assessment is made that enough time be provided -- say two and a half days -- to permit interviews with the political leadership of the state and editors of the major newspapers as well. These are important and generally perceptive "regents watchers." Their reactions have special relevance to one of the criteria for judging regent performance -- being accountable to the legislature and general public

Over the two-day period we met with about 65 to 70 persons. They were, without exception, candid and forthcoming in their comments. Student and dean, professor and civil servant, alumnus and member of the academic staff -- all cared deeply about the university and were proud to be associated with it. The people of Minnesota are well-served by such talented and committed persons.

Neither we nor the representative groups we talked with are under any illusion that there is any such thing as a perfectly representative group for any constituency. The University of Minnesota is much too complex and diverse, too much a mirror of the larger society, to permit easy, authoritative representation of every interest and viewpoint. But what was most striking was that in each group, men and women spoke not to differences among themselves but to what they shared in common.

In the easy exchange of views, in responses to probing questions, those we interviewed sketched out their perceptions of governance at their university.

The overall assessment of the performance of the current Board of Regents is, we are pleased to say, overwhelmingly positive. With few exceptions, those we interviewed feel good about the regents. This is a major turnaround from the trauma of a few years ago. At that time, mutual recriminations about the reserve funds and Eastcliff, the threat of legislative intervention, the resignation of the president, the action of the Governor in creating a Blue Ribbon Commission -- all raised serious questions in the minds of people all over the state. The University of Minnesota, the state's proudest possession, fell under heavy criticism. The university was hurt the most where the damage is potentially the greatest -- in credibility. And the root cause of the loss of credibility was, in the words of the Senior Advisers' report (part of the report of the Blue Ribbon Commission), that a real question of trust has existed (emphasis supplied).

In a challenge to the Board of Regents and to the university community, the Senior Advisers said, "Failure of communication, violation of policy-making roles, interference in the management process -- these and other violations of good practice are serious and must not be repeated." "The great need," they went on to say, "is to re-establish and recapture the sense of family within and among the components of the university. Its strength derives from its unity as a team effort."

As we listened to the groups, it was obvious by what was not said as well as by what was said that the healing process is well advanced, that the university -- at least in the eyes of the leadership of students, faculty, and staff -- has done much to regain credibility, and that the level of trust has risen significantly.

The university community feels good about its president. As the Regents' report states,

[T]he selection of Nils Hasselmo as President . . . has proven to be a crucial turning point for the University. The Board of Regents recognized this action was important at the time, of course, but the significance has been larger than anticipated. In the nearly two years since his arrival, it is clear that President Hasselmo has been the major factor in improving the University's position in almost every sphere of operation.

The interviews bore out the Regents' report on actions taken on the major recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission. The Regents and the President worked as a team in shaping major policies, notably the major directions outlined in "Access to Excellence." Recently, they worked as a team in

developing a tough-minded, inherently controversial policy on reallocation of resources. They worked as a team in holding several retreats and, most noteworthy, in convening Open Forums "where individuals can speak on a topic of their choice related to the university." This is creative policy-making at its best, opening the channels of communication to permit direct access to the governing board.

Finally, individual Regents have joined the President not simply in ceremonial occasions but in meetings with legislators. They have provided persuasive evidence of board-president teamwork and commitment to reach out, in the tradition of a land-grant university, to the four corners of the state. All this and more has been observed and appreciated by the university community.

The above general comments serve to introduce the specific assessment of performance under each of the eleven (11) criteria our committee was asked to use.

The criteria are:

- articulating and achieving the mission of the University
- establishing and maintaining a clear set of Regental policies
- representing a diverse set of backgrounds, interests and competencies
- understanding the authority resides only with the Board as a whole
- organizing the Board to best fulfill responsibilities
- selecting and assessing the performance of the President
- building a positive trusting relationship with administration
- building a positive trusting relationship with faculty
- building a positive trusting relationship with students
- maintaining communication with other systems of higher education
- being accountable to the legislature and general public

1. Regent performance: Articulating and achieving the mission of the university.

In a major statement on the Board of Regents' responsibilities, approved by the Board February 10, 1989, the Board listed as the first of twelve responsibilities: Clarify the mission of the university and approve programs necessary to achieve it. (Emphasis provided.)

It has been 140 years since the Territory created the University of Minnesota and in marvelously generous and simple language declared that "the object of the University shall be to provide the

inhabitants of this Territory with the means of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the various branches of Literature, Science, and the Arts" -- language perpetuated by the Constitution of the State of Minnesota, Article 8, Section 4.

In the nearly century and a half since then, the University of Minnesota has become a huge, comprehensive institution whose instructional offerings span large universes of general and specialized knowledge, whose research interests are awesome in their reach and complexity, whose public service efforts extend the university in important ways not dreamt of by the founders. The university's size alone is mind-boggling to visitors from abroad, and even to Minnesotans struggling to understand the university in its entirety. (The civil service staff alone numbers over 13,000 persons.)

It is an article of faith among students of higher education, especially those studying systems and sub-systems of public higher education, that the state interest is best served by a state system of institutions, each institution differentiated by mission, that is to say role and scope.

A college or university with only a hazy sense of its special role is tempted to indulge sprawl. In colloquial language, "if you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?" Part of the accountability which the public deserves is denied if there is no clear definition of the objectives of the institution.

Around the nation, as in Minnesota, land-grant universities in particular are struggling to define and redefine their roles. The issues are hardly "academic." They go to the heart of vital issues of public policy in higher education.

Must a land-grant university open its doors to all graduates of an accredited high school? Some so believe, though nothing in the federal designation of an institution as "land-grant" supports this view.

Must land-grant institutions, to be true to their historic mission, provide open access? Nothing in the experience of the 50 states supports the view; greater selectivity in admissions is the trend in a number of states.

Must land-grant universities make their mark as research universities? As the demand for greater attention to undergraduate education increasingly dominates the deliberations of governors, legislatures, and governing boards, the primacy of research is suspect.

Must land-grant (and now the sea grant) universities provide virtually the full cafeteria of organized instruction? State coordinating agencies and state legislatures are decreeing otherwise, insisting that tradition no longer justifies, if it ever did, the impulse of "be all things to all people." The professions along with graduate programs are deemed to be too expensive, too specialized, to be offered indiscriminately by competing state universities.

In short, the land-grant university, long preeminent as the senior institution in the state, now finds itself in competition with the rising aspirations of state regional colleges, many of which aspire to the title "university" and to a wide breadth of offerings in graduate and professional fields.

In few states has the issue been so starkly joined as in Minnesota, where "land-grant" has long been the battle cry of citizens who have believed that the tightening of academic standards is a betrayal of the land-grant tradition, a denial of their university's true mission.

President Keller's bold proposal "Commitment to Focus" raised sharply the question of the mission of the university, principally on the issue of selectivity.

Is there a clear mission statement guiding the regents and the administration? We got conflicting answers from those interviewed. The most recent Board-approved mission statement appears in an eight-page brochure issued in 1980. It is easy to fault the statement for the all-inclusive role it sets forth for the university, for its lack of precision, its failure to define what the university is pledged to do and not to do. The statement is silent on the issue of the degree of selectivity in undergraduate admissions. However, the statement is richly descriptive of the university's perception of itself -- extolling the wide reach of its aspirations, its continuing dedication to the land-grant tradition. It is an important document, providing as it does a general sense of the university's history and what it is about.

Is it essential at this time to craft a new mission statement? Some of those interviewed believed that despite the admitted difficulty of reaching agreement within the university community it was

desirable. Absent agreement, the university will continue to be haunted by controversy as it makes tough and difficult policy issues such as the recommended closing of the Waseca campus.

However, the dominant view seemed to be that while it was unarguable that every university or college should have a clear mission statement, this was hardly a high priority at this time. Faculty and academic administrators were aware that it would be enormously difficult to develop a single, all-encompassing statement that would command the assent of all constituencies. A recent effort by the Faculty Consultative Committee to review a draft of a new mission statement floundered on irreconcilable differences. The effort to sharply define mission could prove divisive and distracting. And anyway, it was argued, the university does have a clear sense of what it expects of itself and what the people expect of it.

Is the university adrift because of the absence of an updated mission statement? Not at all. In a very real sense, a major university defines its mission by what it does and, in today's tight economy, by what it sloughs off as not central to its mission. The Board, the president, and the faculty, working as a team, have spelled out with courage and care its major policies and directions in "Access to Excellence." The Board-approved plan committing the university to a major reallocation of resources gives substance to the commitment to the dual goal of access and excellence. Thus a good argument can be made that the university is sharpening its focus to fit the temper of the times and that this is far more important than the search for a possibly illusory agreement on a "clarified" mission statement for public distribution. Plainly, the issue of mission is not likely to go away soon.

Observation: The perception is that the Board of Regents, working closely with the President, has done a good job recently in articulating and achieving the mission of the university.

Recommendation: That the 1980 statement be supplemented by a very brief mission statement that compresses in very few words the basic charter of the university. The mission/charter, like a constitution, should not be cluttered with the specifics of policy. The basic mission should stand, even as the state constitution stands. Conceived of as a living document, the mission must serve as the basic framework, with supporting objectives that will be manifested in basic regental documents such as "Access to Excellence."

2. Regent performance: Establishing and maintaining a clear set of regental policies.

A recommendation of the Senior Advisers on governance was that the Board, in its policies and behavior, draw the critical distinction between the Board's responsibility for policy and the president's responsibility for executive leadership and management. This critical distinction is admittedly difficult to apply in practice, with some matters falling in a shaded area, but it is essential that the distinction be set forth and affirmed as a basic principle.

A related recommendation of the Senior Advisers was that the regents "publish a code setting forth the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the Board and the president in the governance system, a code regularly updated."

The Regents were urged to state as a matter of policy that the Chair is the only spokesperson of the Board.

These recommendations were substantially adopted as presented. The Board is developing a regents' policy book, the equivalent of a "code." That document now includes the important principle that Board members will look to the Chair to serve as the official spokesperson. It also includes a one-page, 12-point statement, admirable in its clarity and coverage, defining the responsibilities of the Board of Regents. It is paralleled by a one-page, 16-point statement carefully defining the responsibilities of individual regents. Both statements are excellent and could profitably serve as a model for other governing boards unclear about such matters.

The policy book, we learned, is nearing completion after over a year of work. As is often the case, policies adopted on different occasions need to be reviewed and sometimes reconciled. Policies and procedures appropriate to an administrative handbook become mixed with regents' policies. Beyond that lies the task of organizing such a policy book in a fashion that makes it most readily useable. The objective is to have a current and useful edition of policies available electronically and in hard copy.

Observation: The Regents' leadership, including guidance of the project by a committee of regents, has been exemplary.

Recommendation: That the project be completed at an early date and the university community be made aware of the availability of the policy book for easy reference.

3. **Board performance: Representing a diverse set of backgrounds, interests, and competencies.**

The Board does not select its own members as is the case in boards of independent colleges and universities. Each Regent has come through an elective process that is much more rigorous than before, thanks to the painstaking work of Minnesota's pioneering Regents Candidate Advisory Council. The congressional district representation for two-thirds of the members of the Board of Regents provides a measure of geographic constituency orientation. But it is an unnecessary and dangerous leap of logic for a regent to perceive himself or herself as primarily the servant of a particular geographical area or, equally important, of any particular interest group, community, region, or political party.

Reasonable diversity, not representation, is the ideal. The challenge to the Regents Candidate Advisory Council and the legislature, which has the final authority, is to choose Board members so that the Board as a whole is enriched by a diversity of experience and perspective.

An individual regent may by virtue of his or her experience have a special insight and empathy on some of the issues before the Board. The goal of diversity makes it entirely appropriate for the Board member to share such insights with colleagues. What is not appropriate is to exercise influence with the administration at any level to gain some special advantage for any individual or issue.

The transcendent obligation of each regent is to keep the "big picture" in mind, to scrupulously honor the commitment to the long-term best interests of the university and the state. This is a difficult mandate for it flies in the face of normal instincts, i.e. the desire to do battle for those with whom one is most closely associated.

How has the performance of the Board measured up? From all we could learn from the interviews, the current Board members respect one another. Very real differences in outlook and on policy proposals have not escalated to harmful divisions of the Board or personal feuds -- a danger in boards everywhere.

A British jurist, Lord Moulton, analyzing the moral domain of law, wrote of the "obligation to the unenforceable." It is an insightful concept, and bears directly on the matter of performance of each regent. No governing board can effectively police an errant member. In this instance the regents by explicit rule have crafted a statement of responsibilities which places the burden of appropriate behavior squarely on the shoulders of each regent. More than this cannot reasonably be expected.

Observation. An important perception by some is that the tone and level of discussion of the Board is not always focused on policy issues, and that some members are tempted to act as if the Board were a "mini-legislature."

The present Board works hard at its task, is approachable, listens well. Plainly, its members are dedicated. As for diversity, the Board seeks to promote diversity on campus. Diversity can be a great strength. But it must be accompanied by the recognition of the need to develop shared values. Diversity is a means not an end.

No process for selecting members for a governing board guarantees ideal results. However, the present Regent Candidate Advisory Council provides the best assurance that the highly qualified candidates will be selected, and that the goal of diversity on the Board will be achieved.

Recommendation: That the Board continue to support the work of the Regent Candidate Advisory Council.

4. Board performance: Understanding that the authority resides only with the Board as a whole.

Although there have been egregious examples of individual regents forgetting that authority resides only with the whole Board, the Board has clearly moved in the right direction -- this in the view of persons close to Board operations. Universities are notorious for "end runs." Despite orderly channels for resolving issues within the University (budget, personnel actions, discontinuance of programs), some faculty and administrators believe it their citizen's "right" to ignore university policies and make a direct appeal to individual regents. Such appeals become very difficult for regents to "field." As public officials, they feel an obligation to listen to concerns, whether presented by letter or in person. The risk, of course, is the rush to judgment. Good intentions are no protection against premature or excessive involvement -- it is the full Board which deserves to hear concerns. And the president and his staff function best when they are the first rather than the last to hear of problems and concerns.

Concluding observation. The perception is that for the most part, the Board honors its own mandate to "understand that the authority resides only with the Board as a whole." There is the sense that on occasion a Board member is responsive to the "end-run." As the Board confronts extremely complex and important issues (for example the steam contract), the line between policy and management becomes blurred and the danger of micromanagement is present. If Board members need reminding occasionally of the need to not intervene in administration, it is also importantly true for the administration to realize that on highly technical issues neither the Board nor the staff may be able to claim great expertise. In such matters there can be no doubt of the obligation of the Board to exercise its lay judgment. It is the Board which, it must be remembered, bears the final responsibility.

Recommendation: That the Board continue to make use of retreats as the appropriate place for reassessing how well the regents, singly and collectively, are meeting the self-imposed obligations found in the lists on regental responsibilities.

5. Regents' performance: Organizing the Board to best fulfill responsibilities.

The Board gets high marks for working together to get the job done. The committee structure is thought appropriate to the tasks. The use of retreats is commended as a way of reinforcing the ties that make the group a genuine governing board, not simply an aggregate of individuals each with his or her own agenda.

All of the constituencies are impressed by the open, friendly, approachable character of the Board. The Open Forums, with regents in attendance, symbolize for the university community the willingness of the regents to listen, to be part of dialogue on issues important across the university. In short, the Board has created an atmosphere conducive to good relations with the university community -- a singular achievement in a very large university.

Plainly, today's good communication did not just happen. The Board, thanks to the quietly effective labors of the Chair, has managed a major turnaround in the image it presents to "regent watchers."

In an age where public relations is often viewed as the manipulation of public opinion, the Board has changed its image the right way. In a huge university, the governing board is often seen as remote, hence indifferent to student, faculty, and employee concerns. Working as a team, the president and the Board have put a human face on the leadership. Regents are seen frequently at ceremonial occasions. They join the president in visits with legislators from their districts.

Genuine interest in others cannot be feigned. When the Chair attended the retirement ceremonies for a police chief who had served the university long and faithfully, this measure of respect was noted and greatly appreciated.

Right now things are going well. Communication channels are open. The Board is respected by the various constituencies. However, there is some uneasiness. Try as they will, the Board has difficulty -- as boards generally do -- focusing their energies on the policy issues and in communication.

Good communication is a fragile achievement. It must be attended to constantly. We note that controversy on campus often leads to the charge of poor communication when, in fact, the communication is good -- it is simply that those in authority do not agree.

There is some feeling that the Board must be more available -- especially to the civil service and the academic staff. It may be that the energies of regents should be more carefully targeted. But to ask for more appearances by regents is unrealistic and unwise. There are over 30 commencements alone, and the daily calendar is crowded with events on all of the campuses.

Attendance by Board members at ceremonial events must be a shared responsibility and should be strictly budgeted, preserving the energies of busy men and women whose first charge is policy-making. Simply to scan the Board agenda for any meeting should disabuse any critic of the notion that the Board has "extra" time at its disposal.

6. Board performance: Selecting and assessing the performance of the president.

From all accounts, the Board clearly understood that the choice of the next president was crucial. As the Senior Advisers noted, "no other decision has such far-reaching consequences, holds so much promise and so much risk." Plainly, the regents took the appointment of the next president to be the most important single decision they have made or are likely to make. Now, over two years later, the selection of Nils Hasselmo is applauded by the university community as an excellent decision.

The regents conducted a formal evaluation of the president in early summer 1990. This evaluation, unusually soon after the selection of the president, elicited broad approval of the leadership the president was showing. From all that we learned, the president continues to enjoy strong support throughout the university community.

The performance of the President is in significant ways inseparable from the performance of the Board. A president may propose highly controversial, bold solutions on major issues. But it is the Board, finally, which joins with the president in the tough decisions or rejects his counsel. The strength and durability of Regent-President teamwork will be put to the test as the university moves from broad policy statements to specific implementation, as for example cutting programs and eliminating organizational units.

As the Regents continue to assess the performance of the president, it is useful for them to keep in mind that their performance is being assessed as well. As Clark Kerr observed in The Guardians (AGB publication, 1990), "The performance of a president depends on the conduct of the board above almost all else except for the personality of the president himself or herself; and the performance of a board almost equally depends on the conduct of the president." Governing boards ought never to be expected to provide uncritical support for their chief executive officer and his or her associates. The lay judgment of the regents and -- yes -- their good counsel on political matters is important to the success of the president.

Observation. Assessment must be seen in context. Kenneth Dayton, a Minnesota businessman now chairing the Regents Selection Advisory Council, in a perceptive essay on governance, rightly states that, "As trustees, we are there, it seems to me, to support, encourage, challenge, stimulate, and help that professional whom we pick to lead our endeavor."

As every constituency within and without the university demands and wins greater participation in the life of the university, as the web of consultative process thickens, the authority of the president to act quickly and decisively is easily diminished. The risk is, of course, the "triumph of technique over purpose," a phrase coined a half century ago in describing the civil service system of New York City.

Wide consultation is a critically important step on the road to decision-making. But consultation is not decision-making, and the burden of decision-making rests, as it always must, on the shoulders of the president and the board.

Recommendation: In the spirit of the "obligation to the unenforceable," the entire university community must keep uppermost in mind that although wide consultation is an essential part of decision-making, the burden of decision-making rests with the president and the Board.

It should also keep in mind that the joint task of the president and the Board is to act in the best interests of the university and the state. Accepting this charge, it is the express responsibility of the president and the Board to make major decisions that are almost invariably difficult, controversial, and sometimes unpopular.

7. Board performance: Building a positive, trusting relationship with administration.

The Board is clearly trying to improve its performance as a policy-making and interpreting body. Its responsibilities are enormous, extending beyond the complex Twin Cities campuses (including the large Health Sciences Center) to the Duluth campus, the Morris, Crookston and Waseca campuses. It cannot possibly do its work without reliance on a highly professional administrative staff.

Trust in the top administrators must be earned. And such trust must be reciprocated. Overall the performance of the Board appears to be good.

The temptation to become fully absorbed with the Twin Cities campus to the neglect of the other campuses and statewide activities is always present. Both the Regents and central administration need to be attentive to this issue, a perennial concern of greater Minnesota.

Individual regents are constantly being tested on whether they represent their geographical area and/or constituent interests or the broad university interest. The consensus is that the Board as a whole continues to move in the right direction as it gains confidence in the president's staff and the administration. If individual Board members seem close to micromanagement, the administration must remember that challenging with probing questions is not to be confused with micromanagement.

Concluding comment. The Board needs time to absorb an agenda which, even with the best efforts, will pose complex issues for discussion and decision. By the same token, the administration needs time to administer the policies adopted by the Board.

Recommendation: That the Board, through its chair, work with the President to focus the agenda on policy issues, keeping the agenda as sparse and uncluttered as possible.

8. Board performance: Building a positive, trusting relationship with faculty.

In universities of high quality it is well understood that a president must have the support of the faculty in order to be truly effective. It is a rare governing board which explicitly sets forth as a measure of its own performance "building a positive trusting relationship with faculty." The Regents of the University of Minnesota have set a high standard for themselves.

The new direction taken by the Board has done much to erase the pervasive distrust that existed just a few years ago. Trust is, of course, in the eye of the beholder. The representatives of the faculty strongly support the Board's sharpened definition of its own responsibilities. They see a time of testing ahead for the Board, puzzle over whether the president has sufficient authority, and worry about "end runs" targeted at Board members. The tone of the Board discussions is sometimes disturbing even if the final decision seems appropriate.

The faculty is, of course, the heart of the university and is always acutely aware of its role. The collective aspirations and talents of the faculty make the University of Minnesota the high quality university that it is. Thus the faculty have a great investment in the university, and many give witness to the value of that investment by committing long years of professional service to the university. The university is noted around the nation for historically strong faculty governance. This leads naturally to a strong sense of possession and with this an ever-present concern about the performance of the Board.

The faculty leadership is pleased with the high caliber of the new Board members and strongly supports the work of the Regent Candidate Advisory Council. The recent action of the retiring governor in bypassing the Council is regretted.

The Board -- it is felt -- needs to work toward a shared understanding of its role, and solidify the growing realization that Board members must not be at the beck and call of constituencies. The atmosphere of calm deliberation set by Chairman Casey is universally applauded and must be continued under the next chair.

On occasion, individual Board members seem bent on micromanagement. However, the Board collectively seems determined to avoid micromanagement. The faculty continue to be concerned about

lack of representation on the Board. The perception is that the faculty voice does not speak as effectively as the student voice. It is an irritant to have a student representative on the Board and not afford the faculty the identical privilege. There is faculty apprehension whether the Board will prove strong and cohesive as it comes face-to-face with budget reallocation decisions that will be highly unpopular with some constituencies.

Faculty believe that in the interest of communication and participation there needs to be faculty on Board committees. There is irony in the suggestion that the Board discipline its own members -- individual faculty are notably averse to "discipline" by the organized faculty.

Concluding comment. In general, the faculty is encouraged by the "new Board," with its new members. Mutual trust can only be built over time. Progress has been made, but there is still room for improvement.

Recommendation: That the Board give serious consideration to communicating more directly with the faculty. One possibility is for the chairperson of the Board to meet periodically with the Faculty Consultative Committee.

9. Board performance: Building a positive, trusting relationship with students.

The student representatives find the regents open, approachable, and genuinely interested in student perspectives. Clearly the student representatives have input, and the Board appears to be listening. The Board seems to be working as a team. Unfortunately, only those few students who are "regent watchers" have a grasp of the range of Board responsibilities and the time commitment and dedication that regents bring to the task.

The student representatives suggested the regents "get the word out" on what they do, communicating directly with the entire student body through articles in the Minnesota Daily. The regional campuses especially often feel out of touch.

The students were much impressed by the willingness of individual regents to appear at university events, especially the Open Forums. The chairman was warmly praised for joining the president in a personal appearance in Waseca to face a large crowd of people protesting the proposal regarding that campus. Students note that their direct access to the regents has had the effect of opening doors to high-level administrators.

Observation. Apparently, the student representatives believe that their most significant impact on university policy comes through their easy, direct access to the Board. Important as Board policies are, the university impacts the lives of students in countless ways beyond the reach of Board policies. The Regents' interest in students should extend beyond its direct association with student leaders. From time to time, the Board should address the policy issue of how students can best participate in decisions that affect them in significant ways.

Recommendation: That the Regents, in cooperation with the President's staff, consider new ways of communicating to students generally, on all campuses the nature of regental responsibilities along with major decisions taken.

10. Board performance: Maintaining communication with other systems of higher education.

The University of Minnesota is part of a state grouping -- some would say "non-system" -- of public postsecondary education in Minnesota: the Minnesota State University System; the Minnesota Community College System; the Minnesota Technical College System; and the independent sector represented by the Minnesota Private College Council. As in many other states, higher educators, along with governors and legislators, are struggling to find means of coordination that will make best use of tax dollars and the student investment.

As Minnesota seeks to balance access and quality in the face of eroding dollars, it is unacceptable for any of the systems to operate in isolation, indifferent to the connecting linkages of the systems and the promise of new forms of interinstitutional cooperation.

The M-SPAN 1 and M-SPAN 2000 studies underscore the need for a comprehensive statewide strategy that will make the public systems as a whole fully responsive and accountable for major changes in higher education. As President Hasselmo forcefully pointed out in his January 9, 1991 letter to the regents, "restructuring of the University of Minnesota raises questions concerning restructuring across higher education systems." In the concluding passage, President Hasselmo made this extremely important comment: "We should welcome a 'Blue Ribbon Committee' that would define a master plan for higher education -- and make specific recommendations to our respective boards." (Emphasis added.)

To its credit, the regents have met on several occasions with other boards in the state. There has been some communication. But is it enough? The regents, it can be argued, can hardly define its role and mission on its own initiative without respect to the respective roles of other institutions, especially the state college system.

Observation. The regents of the University of Minnesota cannot afford to limit their thinking to the perceived self-interest of the university. Difficult and challenging as it may be, the regents need to address the critical issue of how the university can fit best within a reconfigured state system of post secondary education.

Recommendation: That the Regents and the President give encouragement, support, and leadership to planning studies that would move Minnesota toward improved coordination in the use of state resources.

11. Board performance: Being accountable to the legislature and general public.

The criterion is all-important -- and distressingly vague. Those we interviewed see the Board as being very much alive to its public responsibilities. We fully concur. The Board is committed to orderly process -- the process that is due -- whether in assessing the president or in assessing its own performance. We repeat that very few governing boards in major universities undertake on their own volition both an internal and an external assessment of their performance.

The processes of the university strive for openness, for consultation, and for orderly processes of decision-making. The agenda and the minutes are an open book. The Board seeks input not only from the president but from the university community. The administration's recommendation on the Strategy to Improve the Quality of the University, a plan whose importance is difficult to overemphasize, is submitted to the Board of Regents for discussion at the January 1991 meeting. The specific proposals are to be submitted for information at the February meeting, and for action at the March meeting. To listen, to respond to provide for ample discussion -- surely these are impressive measures of accountability. We can only conclude that the people of the state are well served by the present board.

OVERALL OBSERVATIONS

We were asked to assess performance in terms of eleven criteria, and the comments above adhere faithfully to our charge. To organize an assessment around these or any other criteria is to impose a degree of artificiality in the assessment. Just as in daily life when we take the measure of a person as a whole, it is useful to take the measure of the Board as a whole. And this is precisely what "regent watchers" are inclined to do. This is because the decisions taken in the Board room (a small, cramped, unattractive room) affect for better or worse so many people in so many ways.

* The civil servant staff, numbering some 13,000 men and women without whose daily work the giant enterprise of teaching, research, and service would grind to sudden and disastrous halt, wonder about "the wall" between them and the Board. The "door is ajar" but needs to be opened wide. The sense is that the regents are only vaguely aware of their contributions and their concerns, among other things, about salary equity. Civil servant personnel, many with long years of service, do not regard the university as just another place to work. Proud of their university, they ask for more recognition and wonder if their interests are to be adequately protected in a time of shrinking financial resources.

* The volunteers who serve on the Foundation Board and the Alumni Association are an essential part of the university, though they have no direct authority over university policy. Leaders of exceptional talent and energy, they contribute mightily to the vitality of the university -- and to its credibility. They see much improved relations with constituencies, applaud the determination to stress quality, and are impressed with the "new" Board. As influential members of the community, they are acutely aware that the university faces extraordinary challenges as it enters an era of fiscal stringency coupled with escalating demands for greater accountability. They see the Regent Candidate Selection Council as the key to a strengthened Board of Regents. The selection process, which is new and runs against the grain of the political process in the legislature, has to be sold and resold to legislators and governors. In short, it has to be institutionalized.

* The regents are fortunate in having a very able staff -- open accessible, and responsive.

As your Board assessment committee, we again applaud the Regents for undertaking an assessment whose outcome you could neither predict nor control. As this report indicates, the university community has a keen appreciation of the importance of your task, has confidence in the president you chose, and perceives you as conscientious and dedicated men and women engaged in "the most important volunteer

assignment in the state." The "regent watchers," though by no means unanimous in their judgment, believe the Board is moving in the right direction, hope that you can "stay the course" as a policy body.

The expectations for quality performance on your part are many:

- * You are asked to be even more available.
- * You are asked to communicate even more with every constituency.
- * You are asked to listen, but to avoid a rush to judgment.
- * You are asked to create a climate of trust -- as if creating trust were a unilateral initiative.
- * You are asked to involve more persons and more groups in more decisions -- and yet simplify and shorten your board meetings.
- * You are asked to keep the university's best interests at heart, knowing that there is too little agreement on "the best interest."
- * You are asked to deal quickly and effectively with issues that are wreathed in complexity.
- * You are asked to be more diverse, though you do not select your members.
- * You are asked to cultivate public support for the university through your associations with the political and business leaders of the state -- but avoid entangling alliances.
- * You are asked, finally, to accept criticism quietly and courteously.
- * You are asked to do all this and more as lay persons with limited time stolen from your work and your family.

As we conclude our assignment, we would say to the Board:

If as regents you are asked to do more than you can possibly do, remember that your efforts are appreciated more than you may realize.

And to the university community we would say:

The men and women who make up a board which is, and must be, part-time deal in matters that are complex and controversial. Wish for them as for yourselves the saving grace of perspective.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF BOARD OF REGENTS' EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS

Harold L. Enarson is Senior Advisor to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), and a consultant on higher education. His formal education has been at the University of New Mexico (B.A.), Stanford University (M.A.), and American University (Ph.D.). He has served governmental and educational agencies at the local, state, regional, national and international level. Dr. Enarson taught at the University of New Mexico, Stanford, Whittier College, and the University of California - San Francisco; served as academic vice-president at the University of New Mexico; and was the first president at Cleveland State University and later was president of The Ohio State University. In 1988, he was one of three senior advisors to the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission examining management of the University of Minnesota.

Margaret Langfeld is a member of the Anoka County Board of Commissioners, first elected in 1982, and has been active in community affairs in Minnesota at the local, county and state level for many years. Some of her many accomplished activities include: past President of the Association of Minnesota counties; past President of the League of Women Voters; current Chair of the Anoka County Community Development Committee; founder and past Chair of the Anoka County Battered Women's Shelter; founder and past Director of the Anoka County Economic Development Partnership; and member of the Blaine City Council, the Governor's Job Training Council, the Governor's Non-Tax Revenue Commission, the Anoka County Public Transit Advisory Committee, and the Anoka Ramsey Community College Advisory Board.

Jean L. Harris, M.D., is currently President and Chief Executive Officer of the Ramsey Foundation. She has been in private medical practice and held academic appointment in medical schools at Howard University, Johns Hopkins University, UCLA, and Virginia Commonwealth University. She was Executive Director of the National Medical Association and Secretary of Human Resources for the state of Virginia. Dr. Harris is currently involved in numerous community activities in Minnesota including the Eden Prairie City Council, the South Hennepin Human Services Council, the Board of Directors for Cornerstone (battered women), the United Way, Rotary International, and the Hennepin County Community Health Advisory Board. She is a member of the Board of Trustees at the University of Richmond.

Robert L. Heller is the retired Chancellor of the University of Minnesota, Duluth. His formal education in geology was at Iowa State University of Science and Technology (B.S.), and the University of Missouri (M.S. and Ph.D.). Dr. Heller served in the Corps of Engineers, and has held teaching positions at the University of Missouri and the University of Minnesota. As an administrator within the University of Minnesota - Duluth, he was successively Department of Geology Head, Assistant to the Provost, Assistant Provost, Associate Provost, Provost and Chancellor. He has continued to be active in his professional field of geology, and currently is Chair of the Board of Trustees of the American Geological Institute Foundation.

PROCESS FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

INTRODUCTION

Governance of a public university is an opportunity for stewardship of a vital public resource. A governing board's performance, therefore, must be subject to high standards of evaluation, ranging from introspective discussion to rigorous external review. Informally, evaluation of a governing board is continuous, but it is important to conduct formal, in-depth assessments on a regular schedule. The following describes the assessment proposed for 1991. It should be noted that the assessment will focus on the performance of the Board of Regents as a collective body.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Regents of the University of Minnesota have made concerted efforts to conduct self-assessments on several occasions. Comprehensive reviews of the President and the Board of Regents were undertaken in 1978 and 1984. Annual retreats since 1986 have included Board assessment as a regular part of the agenda. The self-assessment questionnaire developed by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges was completed by each Board member and a summary of those results was the basis for an extensive discussion by the Board in 1986, with follow-up discussion in 1987. In 1988, the Board reviewed a list of governing board responsibilities developed by John Nason, a respected authority on academic governance, and in February 1989, the Board reviewed and approved lists of Board and individual Regent responsibilities. Goals for the 1989-90 academic year were reviewed in fall 1989 and progress toward those goals was discussed by the Board the following fall.

CRITERIA

The assessment will use criteria developed by the Association of Governing Boards, modified to address specific recommendations from the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission of Financial Management of the University. Those criteria are:

- articulating and achieving the mission of the University
- establishing and maintaining a clear set of Regental policies
- -- representing a diverse set of backgrounds, interests and competencies
- understanding the authority resides only with the Board as a whole
- organizing the Board to best fulfill responsibilities
- selecting and assessing the performance of the President
- building a positive trusting relationship with administration
- building a positive trusting relationship with faculty
- building a positive trusting relationship with students
- maintaining communication with other systems of higher education
- being accountable to the legislature and general public

PROCESS/TIMELINE

- December 14, 1990 The Chair of the Board of Regents appoints a Board Assessment Committee that includes one of the three senior advisors on University Governance reporting to the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Financial Management of the University of Minnesota as chair, a retired University administrator and two community leaders.
- January 1, 1991 The Chair of the Board of Regents, on behalf of the Board, submits to the Board Assessment Committee a response to the recommendations on governance contained in the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission report and a summary of the Board's response to the self-assessment questionnaire developed by the Association of Governing Boards.
- January 16-17, 1991 The Board Assessment Committee meets with various constituency groups including students, faculty, staff, administration, alumni and community.
- January 31, 1991 The Committee formulates an assessment report based on the review of documents and feedback received.
- February 16, 1991 The Board of Regents engages in a thorough discussion of the report and its recommendations at a retreat.
- March 8, 1991 The Chair presents recommendations to the Board for action.