

## Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

This standard requires a policy or procedure. See Appendix A of this document for implications. See also:

SACSCOC good practices: [Developing Policy and Procedures Documents](#)

## Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

None noted.

### **4.2.f** The governing board protects the institution from undue influence by external persons or bodies. (*External influence*)

#### Rationale and Notes

Effective governing boards adhere to the laws and regulations that underpin the institution's legitimacy while championing its right to operate without unreasonable intrusions by governmental and nongovernmental agencies and entities. This applies to any governing board, whether public, private not-for-profit, or private for-profit. The board protects and preserves the institution's independence from outside pressures.

“Undue” influence does not mean “no” influence. Elected officials, corporate offices, alumni associations, and religious denominational bodies are examples of persons or bodies that appropriately have interests in the activities of related colleges and universities. However, the governing board of the institution has been vested with the authority to make decisions regarding the institution, and no outside person, board, or religious or legislative body should be in a position to interfere with the governing board's ultimate authority to fulfill its responsibilities or to interfere in the operations of the institution.

#### Questions to Consider

- How and to what extent are governing board members educated regarding their responsibilities?
- What safeguards are in place to protect the institution from undue influence of external bodies or persons?
- In cases where undue external influence was sought by external bodies or individuals, what actions were taken by the governing board?

#### Sample Documentation

- Bylaws, operating manuals or handbooks, and/or orientation materials that outline board member duties and responsibilities.
- Details on board training.

- Details on board member selection processes.
- Documents and reports of board actions to resolve cases of undue external pressures, if appropriate.

## Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

None noted.

## Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

CR 4.1 (Governing board characteristics)

Standard 4.2.d (Conflict of interest)

Standard 4.2.g (Board self-evaluation)

### **4.2.g** The governing board defines and regularly evaluates its responsibilities and expectations. *(Board self-evaluation)*

#### Rationale and Notes

As the body that holds in trust the fundamental autonomy and ultimate well-being of the institution, the governing board of the institution is a critical element in the success of the institution. Good institutional governance requires that the board systematically asks itself, “How are we doing? What are we doing? Are we as effective as a board as we can be?” The process of institutional improvement underlies the *Principles of Accreditation*. While the means by which a governing board participates in that process may be different in scope, tone, and detail than that of the rest of the institution, it is still a necessary element in institutional leadership.

A good starting place is a self-reflective examination of the issues that underlie the governance standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* and the “Questions to Consider” in this section of this *Resource Manual*. How this is done is something best determined by a governing board itself. Some institutions use a board retreat format. Some boards build self-reflection into an annual orientation/reorientation of the board. Some boards facilitate this process by using external resources such as a facilitator or a book, although that is not a requirement of this standard. What is expected of this standard is something more substantive than a statement that “the board conducted a self-evaluation.”

#### **NOTE**

*If the institution has multiple governing boards [see Standard 4.3 (Multi-level governance)], then the institution should address the self-evaluation process for all relevant boards.*