



KEAN UNIVERSITY
FOUNDATION

Board Self-Assessment Tool



Overview

This Nonprofit Board Self-Assessment Tool is designed to help the Kean University Foundation assess its board's performance and identify priorities for board activities going forward. It has been proven that this combination of performance assessment and priority-setting is the foundation of superior nonprofit board performance over time. The output of this assessment is intended to focus discussion among board members around the activities that will result in the greatest benefit for the Kean University Foundation. This tool should be used:

- to identify the areas of board performance that are strongest and those that need improvement;
- to identify priority areas for the board to focus on over the next (1) or two (2) years; and
- to allow different views to emerge – the difference between responses given by two (2) groups of board members or by the board and senior staff can be tracked and then used to start a discussion.

Superior board performance across the full range of nonprofit institutions cannot be precisely defined. Respondents should use their best judgment to rate the Kean University Foundation board in the spirit, if not in the letter, of the performance description. The scores are meant to provide a general indication – a “temperature” taking – of the Foundation's board's performance, in order to identify potential areas for improvement.

Please make generous use of the comments section to expand on or explain your ratings. Summaries of anonymous comments are often as helpful as the ratings themselves in surfacing issues.

This tool is meant to create an informed starting point for discussion among the leadership of the Kean University Foundation. Informed discussion and commitment to addressing priorities will result in greater board effectiveness.

Guidelines for Assessors

This Nonprofit Board Assessment Tool has three (3) sections:

- 1 Performance of the board (or board sub-committees) on its core responsibilities;
- 2 Perceived importance of responsibilities for the next couple of years; and
- 3 Quality of enablers in place to support board effectiveness.

In sections one (1) and three (3), “Performance of the board on its core responsibilities” and “Enablers of board effectiveness,” a description of distinctive performance has been given for each responsibility and enabler. Please rate how well the Kean University Foundation board is performing on a scale of one (1) to four (4) (1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good and 4 = distinctive). Our performance does not need to match the distinctive description precisely in order to be distinctive. Rather, the description is given as an indication of the general level of performance to help calibrate your rating. Please use the comments section to expand on any aspect of performance you wish. If a row is not relevant to the organization assessed, write “N/A” in the comments section; if you simply have no knowledge, write “D/K.”

For each of the responsibilities in Section two (2), “Perceived importance of responsibilities for the next couple of years,” indicate how important you believe it will be for the board to focus on each area in order to make the most positive impact on the performance of the Kean University Foundation. Since our board cannot focus on all responsibilities with equal weight at the same time, the ratings are intended to indicate relative priorities for each responsibility. Please return your completed tool to the Kean University Foundation, who will collate the results and compile an anonymous summary of comments for board discussion.

Please identify your role:

Board Member _____ Management _____ Other _____

Approximate time needed for completion: 15 minutes

Areas Covered by this Assessment

Section 1

Performance of Board on its Core Responsibilities

- Shape mission and strategic direction
- Clarify mission and vision
- Participate in and approve strategic and policy decisions
- Ensure leadership and resources
- Ensure adequate financial resources
- Provide expertise and access for organizational needs
- Build reputation
- Monitor and improve performance
- Oversee financial and risk management

Section 2

Perceived Importance of Responsibilities for the Next Couple of Years

Section 3

Enablers of Board Effectiveness

- Size and structure
- Composition
- Leadership
- Processes

Section 1

Performance of Board on its Core Responsibilities



Section 1

Performance of Board on its Core Responsibilities

Shape the Mission and Vision	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Common understanding of the mission	All board members share a common understanding of the mission of the Kean University Foundation		
Common understanding of vision (i.e., what the Foundation aspires to become in a few years)	All board members share a common understanding of where KUF wants to be in five (5) to ten (10) years; vision is well documented with concrete goals.		
Use of the mission and vision in policy/strategy decisions	All major policy/strategy discussions include explicit consideration of fit with the mission and vision		
Process for raising mission and vision issues	Formalized process (e.g., board retreats) to foster active board member participation in examining mission-related issues		
Process for strategic planning and quality of board participation	Formal process for board involvement that specifies broad framework (timing and content) for strategic planning; joint board and staff		

Engage in Strategic Planning and Policy Decisions	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Quality of strategic plan	Robust plan covers all key strategic elements; agreed upon program outcomes are tightly linked to mission and vision as well as results that will inform subsequent decisions; clear plan for closing resource gaps if any		
Agreement on the distinction between board level and management -level decisions	Board and staff have a shared understanding of relative roles (written or explicitly discussed); all parties feel their views are heard in the process; frequent interaction between CEO and Board Chair ensure "no surprises" environment		
Succession planning	Board has explicit view on succession and actively works with the CEO to identify internal candidates and provide development opportunities for the top three (3) to five (5) candidates to "round out" their skills		
Evaluation and development process	Evaluations performed at least annually		

Section 1 (continued)

Performance of Board on its Core Responsibilities



Ensure Adequate Financial Resources	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Financial needs assessment	Board works with Foundation staff as a part of strategic planning process to develop a multi-year view of funding requirements and trade-offs embedded in different resource levels; board feels strong ownership for the targets		
Individual donations to the organization	All board members financially support the Foundation, which is a priority for each board member's charitable giving; board consistently meets/ sometimes exceeds "donation" goals		

Provide expertise and access for organizational needs	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Board understanding of needed access and influence to support organizational objectives	Needs for access and influence based on strategic view of organizational objectives; needs identified in detail to allow meaningful roles to be identified for individual directors		
Ability of the board to provide access and influence as needed	Board proactively reaches out to further organizational goals and is frequently very influential in achieving them		
Board understanding of needed expertise to support organizational objectives, e.g. financial, strategic, subject matter expertise	Needs for expertise based on strategic view of KUF's objectives; needs identified in detail to allow meaningful roles to be identified for individual directors		
Ability of the board to provide expertise	Board expertise addresses most needs and is seen as source of distinctive value to KUF		

Section 1 (continued)

Performance of Board on its Core Responsibilities



Build reputation	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Board's understanding of reputation objectives and of the role the board can play in building/enhancing reputation	Needs for reputation building based on strategic view of Kean's objectives; needs identified in detail to allow meaningful roles to be identified for individual directors		
Board effectiveness in enhancing reputation of Kean University	Board members proactively reach out in communities to build awareness and excitement about Kean University; board members are seen to be very effective ambassadors for Kean		

Oversee Financial Performance, Ensure Risk Management	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Board role in financial planning	Board's active involvement in preparing/reviewing multi-year financial plan results in robust discussion of resource allocation, funding plans, and investment objectives in context of strategic goals.		
Ongoing monitoring of financial and investment performance	Board monitors financial statements regularly; key performance indicators routinely reported to the whole board; well-prepared staff can explain variances and discuss potential corrective actions; "no surprises" because of trust-based communication with staff		
Fiduciary and other regulatory compliance	Board ensures timely, independent audit of results and internal processes; board understands compliance required to regulatory bodies; feedback from auditors/regulators forms basis of recovery plan monitored by board		
Board role in risk management	Board annually reviews potential sources of risk and mitigation plans; surprises or gaps in		

Section 1 (continued)

Performance of Board on its Core Responsibilities

Monitor Performance and Ensure Accountability	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Board involvement in developing performance metrics	Board works with staff to set outcome- based metrics and goals as well as activity/efficiency metrics; targets set for a one (1) to three (3) year period. Performance of comparable institutions is used to inform targets		
Process for monitoring performance	Board routinely monitors and discusses the performance of program/ organization and uses results to inform the strategic plan, resource allocation, and evaluation of staff		
Board understanding of accountability	Board identifies primary stakeholders and ensures that performance results are communicated effectively to these stakeholders		
Process for obtaining and using feedback from stakeholders	Board has formal process in place (e.g., stakeholder committee) to obtain feedback from stakeholders without filters by the staff; board ensures that the results from the stakeholder feedback are used to inform strategy and resource allocation		

Improve board performance	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Goal setting for the board as a follow-up to strategic planning	Board translates the strategic plan for KUF into a set of concrete goals for the board and board committees, including timelines and required staff support		
Evaluation of board performance against goals	Board evaluates its performance against the goals and uses the lessons learned to develop plans to improve board effectiveness		
Process for evaluating individual directors	A board committee in place to evaluate individual director performance periodically and jointly discusses how to help a director give his/her best to KUF; little collective tolerance for directors who are not active in organization governance and support		
Developing a plan for improving board performance over time	Formal process (e.g., annual self- assessment) results in a clear plan for improvement; board collectively owns the topic of improving its value to the Kean University community		



Section 2

Perceived Importance of Responsibilities for the Next Couple of Years



Section 2

Perceived Importance of Responsibilities for the Next Couple of Years

A nonprofit board adds value by undertaking each of the nine (9) responsibilities identified; however, boards rarely have time to focus on all of these responsibilities. As you complete this section, please identify those areas of potential board focus that are most needed over the next couple of years to ensure that KUF succeeds against its mission.

How important is it for your board to focus on:	Low	Medium	High
Clarifying the organization's mission or vision			
Resolving key strategic or policy issues			
Developing the financial resources needed to support the strategic plan			
Providing expertise or access to support organizational priorities			
Building/enhancing the reputation of KUF with key stakeholders			
Overseeing financial performance and ensuring adequate risk management			
Assessing performance against mission and key program priorities			
Improving board performance			

Please add any additional thoughts to explain your answers or identify additional needs:

Section 3

Enablers of Board Effectiveness

Section 3

Enablers of Board Effectiveness

Size and structure	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Board size	Board discusses issue of size explicitly and directors widely believe the current size adequately balances: Coverage of roles-Cohesiveness among members and work load		
Executive Committee	Executive Committee has clear role, well understood and supported by all board members; serves as a valuable resource to the board chair and CEO in guiding the organization and also in improving overall board performance		
Sub-Committee structure: Purpose and charter of sub-committees	Sub-Committee structure is explicitly designed with clear charter around organizational priorities; board effectively uses mix of ad-hoc and standing committees to fulfill objectives		
Mechanisms for increasing affiliation with KUF other than governance board membership	Board has effective structures/mechanisms for affiliation such as advisory groups with well-defined roles		

Size and structure	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Understanding of board composition needed to meet organizational goals	Systematic process for identifying needed board skills driven by the strategic plan; gaps are understood and agreed to by the entire board; most new board members seem to "fit our needs well"		
Process and criteria for recruitment	Formal process with clear evaluative criteria in place; whole board reaches out to potential members from a wide range of sources; recruitment process is continuous and with multi-year horizon; new members are seen as great additions to the board		
Diversity on the board	Board understands types of diversity needed for KUF and the value of diversity; current diversity on the board adequately reflects the diversity needed		
Term limits	Term limits effectively balance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for new members/skills • Retention of valuable directors Mechanisms are in place for ensuring continued involvement of high-performing retiring board members		

Section 3 (continued)

Enablers of Board Effectiveness



Composition	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Orientation of new members	Formal orientation process covers key topics (mission, organization, finances, responsibilities of directors); committee assignments are welcomed by new directors who quickly become effective members of the board		

Leadership (Board chair, committee leaders)	Description of Distinctive Performance	Current Performance (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= distinctive)	Comments
Process for deciding who leads and for how long	Clear, well-understood, and accepted process is in place to select and transition board and committee leadership. Board leadership decisions seen to strengthen performance of KUF		
Succession planning and development of board leaders	Process in place to identify and develop board leaders; sub-committee assignments rotated to give board members experience and opportunity to lead; board seen to have a rich set of future leaders		
Quality of leadership relationship with CEO/	Board leadership has an effective working relationship with the CEO		
Effectiveness of board leadership	Current board leadership has the necessary skills, enthusiasm, energy, and time to provide leadership to the boardtiring board members		



Kean University Foundation
kuf@keanfoundation.org