Responsibilities of Individual Trustees

Since its founding in 1946, Portland State University has benefited greatly from the devotion, service, intellectual contributions, ethical behavior, and philanthropy of many thousands of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends. Those of us who have been chosen to serve as fiduciary trustees for a period of time – to safeguard the University’s assets and to foster its capacity to serve others – have a heightened obligation to the University and to each other. To serve on a university governing board is a significant responsibility.

The trustees of the University have chosen to clarify the responsibilities, obligations and expectations we have of each other. This statement is intended to help those who are asked to consider joining the Board of Trustees to understand more fully what is expected, and to guide the Board in its operations and relations.

We agree that each trustee is specifically responsible for:

- Having the time and energy necessary to faithfully and diligently prepare for and participate in the board’s meetings.
- Believing in the institution’s mission and responsibilities to serve the diverse society that supports and depends on it.
- Asking substantive and timely questions of management and colleague board members in the course of committee and board meetings.
- Speaking candidly, but also being willing to support decisions and policies approved by the board’s majority—even if the trustee did not vote for them.
- Remembering that only the board chair speaks for the board and ordinarily is presumed to be delegated the responsibility to address controversial issues or board decisions with the media. In a similar vein, the President ordinarily speaks for the institution.
- Avoiding personal agendas or being seen as a representative of any internal or external constituency, special-interest group or cause, community, or specific part of the institution.
- Supporting the President of the University while at the same time exercising critical judgment as an active, discerning, energetic, and probing trustee.
- Distinguishing between management and governance issues.
- Communicating any significant concern or complaint promptly to the President.
• Respecting the opinions of others and refraining from public criticism of them or their views.

• Avoiding any possibility of even the perception of a possible conflict of interest with their financial, personal, and family interests.

• Defending the institution’s and the board’s autonomy while working with other trustees to provide accountability and advocacy in equal measure.

APPROVED BY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
January 30, 2014