

BEST PRACTICES

For ELCA Campus Ministry

DEVELOPING A BOARD JOB DESCRIPTION

John Carver has had a major influence on board development in the last decade. In his keystone work, *Boards That Make a Difference*,¹ he urges clarity of function, accountability, and vision as hallmarks of effective boards. He wants boards to understand that they exist primarily to benefit people. It should be the board's *obsession*, he writes. Beyond the routine of meetings, budgets, and goal-setting is the welfare of people. He advocates that board members be recruited primarily because of their vital interest in and commitment to the lives those whom they seek to serve. In our case, that would mean young adults on campus and in the life of the church. A major question to keep in front of the board, therefore, is this: "Are we as a campus ministry board obsessed with the welfare of students and others in the university community?"

Carver is less concerned about expertise than commitment. A "qualified" board member may possess a certain set of skills, which are important and will serve the organization well. Skills are important to consider in recruitment. What is most significant beyond that, however, is the qualification of "grasp, mentality, connectedness and compassion. As an assessment of past selection, consider this test: if fewer than half of the board's members would make good chairpersons, the selection needs improvement."² Do board members "get it?" Do they fully understand the mission of your organization and are they able to live into it with passion, energy and commitment?

Obviously the recruitment process is crucial to good board development. Likewise, orientation of new board members plays a large role in helping new members become familiar with current members, with mission and goals, and with expectations. Some boards invite potential new members to attend a meeting before they sign up, like test-driving a new car. After the meeting they are asked for feedback and have opportunity to ask more questions. They are then asked to fill out an application form and are given a board job description that they sign, indicating that they fully understand the responsibilities and expectations they are about to assume.

Think about boards that you have on which you have participated as a member. What was rewarding about that experience? What was frustrating? What were the surprises? How many times have potential board members been told something like this:

We really don't do a lot at our meetings.

Oh, just show up and you'll figure out how it works.

We have a lot of fun, you'll enjoy the other members.

Our staff person is so good, it really doesn't leave much for us to do.

¹ *Boards That Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations* (Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco) 1997.

² Carver, page 205.

We let the treasurer worry about the budget.
We're so glad you decided to join us, we were having trouble finding people.

Questions to Ask Before Joining a Board

Serving on a board is challenging and serious business. Prior to accepting a position on a board, prospective members are encouraged to ask questions regarding their work and responsibilities. These questions may include:³

Programs

- What is the organization's mission?
- How do programs relate to the mission?
- Is it possible to visit programs and observe them firsthand?
- Is there a strategic plan that is reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis?

Financial Status

- Is the organization financially sound?
- Does the board discuss and approve the annual budget?
- How often do board members receive financial statements?

Constituents

- Whom does the organization serve?
- Are the constituents satisfied with the organization?

Board Structure

- How is the board structured?
- Are there descriptions of the responsibilities of the board as a whole and of individual board members?
- Are there descriptions of board committees and responsibilities?
- Is there a process for handling potential conflict?
- Does the organization have directors and officers liability coverage?

Members' Responsibilities

- How might I contribute as a board member?
- How much time will be required to attend meetings and other events?
- How are committee assignments made?
- What orientation will I receive?
- Are there opportunities for board development and education?
- What is the board's role in fundraising?
- Will I be expected to make an annual financial contribution?
- What role will I play in soliciting donors?
- Is the board satisfied with the performance of the staff?
- How do board members and staff typically work together?

Once these questions have been answered, the potential member must evaluate their interest in serving on the board. They must feel that they are committed to the mission of the organization, can contribute the amount of time necessary, are comfortable with financial expectations, and can place the organization's interests above their own professional and personal interests when making decisions as a board member.

³ Boardsource, Web site information at www.ncnb.org

The Job Description

It is both a courtesy and a matter of good management that everyone who signs on to be a board member receives a job description. This allows them to know in advance what will be expected of them and will serve as an evaluative tool throughout their time of membership. It is not so much a listing of tasks to be performed, as it is an outline of overarching responsibilities. It focuses on “performance outcomes” rather than on activities. For example, the board is responsible for providing adequate financial resources for conducting the mission. Fundraising may be an activity that leads to the outcome of resources. There may be other activities that would lead to the same end. Carver urges us to think of “board products” or end results. “Some might say that fundraising is the chief responsibility, even the *raison d’être*, of a board. I disagree. Fundraising by the board may be critical to a given organization, but it is more important that the organization be *worth raising funds for*.”⁴

Carver summarizes the board’s job products in three basic areas:

Linkage to the ownership

The board serves as a bridge between the constituencies it represents and those it seeks to serve. For campus ministry that means the families, congregations and synods from which students come who provide funding for our ministries. It means the churchwide organization as well. Our constituents are varied and widespread. Communication, interpretation and advocacy bridging with this constituency is a significant responsibility for board members. The board acts as a trustee for the ownership and, as such, owes them accountable reports and personal interaction.

Explicit governing policies

The board determines such things as how staff shall be hired and supervised, how monies are to be secured and spent, how decisions are to be made, and how the work of the board is to be carried out, including committee structure, if any.

Assurance of executive performance

The board is not responsible for micro-managing the day-to-day activities of the staff it hires. It is responsible for the outcomes of staff activities in terms of fulfilling the ministry mission, however. To guide the work of staff, the board develops a job description and performs an annual evaluation. The board must ensure that staff meets the criteria it has set forth.⁵

Each of these board functions is to be considered a “job output,” not a job activity, although activities are certainly involved. The board’s work is not built on activities or nor is it evaluated on the basis of these activities. The board’s work is based on end products, not simply the activities it takes to get there.

⁴ Carver, page 134

⁵ In some cases, where staff services are minimal, board members are often expected to roll up their sleeves and participate in some of the day-to-day functions of the ministry. They are often called a “workgroup board.” In other situations, where staff services are more plentiful, there is a clearer distinction between “staff work” and “board work.” If the board asks a staff person to carry out a task, it ceases to be the function of the board.

For example, if the work of the board is to serve as a bridge to congregations, it will evaluate its effectiveness on the results of its contacts with congregations, not on the number of meetings or on the amount of paper sent to inform about the ministry. Results are the important outcomes, so the board will evaluate whether or not congregations are more informed, more involved and more supportive as a result of the board's bridging connections.

Or, a board may decide that its work is to provide sufficient funds for the ministry to operate and for staff to be paid adequately. Although activities are involved in fund raising, the "job product" is actually the dollars raised. There can be a lot of activity that generates few results. The board needs help to see that what is important is the end result, not just going through the motions. An assembly line should produce an automobile. A series of courses should eventuate in a degree. While activities are part of a strategic plan, and are often interesting and fulfilling to do, the board must look at the results to evaluate its work.

Fundraising activities by the board should be considered on two levels. One is the corporate responsibility for providing adequate monies to support the mission of the organization. This includes setting a strategic direction for fundraising, monitoring income and expenditures, conducting an annual financial review and being good stewards of the gifts that are given. The other level is more personal, where board members as individuals choose to support the organization with their own contributions. Expectations regarding both levels of fundraising should be clear at the time new members are invited to serve on the board.

With all of this as background information and grist for discussion, consider a possible job description for board members. See the following page for a model job description.

APPENDIX A MODEL JOB DESCRIPTION

Title: Lutheran Campus Past [Minister] at [_____] University.

Purpose:

- To address and respond to the religious and spiritual needs of the university community.
- To serve as pastor/minister to students, faculty and staff at [_____] University
- To provide administrative oversight and day-to-day direction of Lutheran Campus Ministry at [_____] University.

Responsibilities:

Worship:

- To lead or provide for regular worship opportunities.
- To provide for administration of the sacraments, and conduct or provide for, occasional services of the church as needed.

Evangelism and Outreach:

- To initiate and nurture relationships with persons on campus “to invite them more deeply into Jesus Christ and the community that bears his name”, and to motivate and equip others to do the same.

Christian Education and Faith Development:

- To provide for opportunities and programs that encourage persons to grow in their understanding of the Christian faith and to relate it to their life and learning.
- To make himself/herself available to the university to provide programming on religious, spiritual, and ethical issues.

Hospitality and Community Building:

- To foster a climate of welcome in Lutheran Campus Ministry toward members of the campus community.
- To nurture healthy interpersonal relationships and communal life within Lutheran Campus Ministry.

Pastoral Care:

- To provide appropriate pastoral care to all members of the campus community.
- To develop a positive working relationship with the university counseling center and the division of the university administration that deals with student life.

Community Service:

- To strengthen Lutheran Campus Ministry’s service to persons in need.
- To create opportunities for service learning.
- To form collaborative partnerships with local service agencies.

Leadership Development:

- To identify, equip, and supervise student leaders of Lutheran Campus Ministry.
- To equip all the baptized in his/her care “. . . to discover and fulfill their vocation as disciples.”
- To identify and encourage persons with appropriate gifts to consider and explore rostered and non-rostered leadership in the church.

Justice and Advocacy:

- To equip the ministry in addressing issues of justice, poverty, and peace in light of the Christian gospel.

Stewardship and Fundraising:

- To support the board in developing, maintaining, and increasing fundraising efforts to support the work of Lutheran Campus Ministry.
- To challenge students, faculty, and staff to grow in their personal stewardship of time, talent, and treasure.

Vision and Planning:

- To assist the board in a regular process of visioning, planning, and evaluation.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Cooperation:

- To nurture relationships with leaders of other religious ministries on campus for the purpose of strengthening the religious voice on campus and improving relationships among faith communities.

Building Relationships:

- To foster positive relationships with partners in Lutheran Campus Ministry, including area congregations, the [] Synod and the ELCA Churchwide Campus Ministry Team (CCMT).
- To develop positive relationships with appropriate offices and divisions of [] University.
- Support and promote the programming of the Lutheran Student Movement at [] University, the [] Region, and LSM-USA.

Administration:

- To supervise employees and student leaders as assigned.
- To assist the board in the operation of the organization.
- To assist the board in board development.
- To have responsibility for major administrative requirements of Lutheran Campus Ministry, including the timely submission of all forms and reports required by the board, [] Synod, and ELCA-CCMT.

Requirements:

Campus Pastor:

- Must be on the clergy roster of the ELCA; or on the clergy roster of another denomination in full communion with the ELCA; or on the clergy roster of a church which accepts the teaching of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
- Demonstrate proficiency and experience in ministry with college students.

Campus Minister:

- Possess a Bachelor's degree;
- and be on the lay roster of the ELCA; or if serving in a multi-staff position supervised by a person on the lay or clergy roster of the ELCA or another denomination in full communion with the ELCA; or serving as a Campus Minister at an ELCA affiliated CMA on or before July 1, 2003.
- Demonstrate proficiency and experience in ministry with college students.

Time Required: Full-Time
[Half-Time]
[___ hours/week]

Accountability:

- Employment relationship to the [employing agency].
- Ecclesiastical relationship to the [appropriate ecclesiastical expression] .

Remuneration: Consistent with the compensation guidelines of the [_____] Synod.