

Penn Staters Reforming the Board of Trustees

www.psu-rebot.org

Who WE ARE



OUR MISSION:

is to amend The Pennsylvania State University Charter, established by statute, to change certain aspects of the structure and functioning of the Board of Trustees. The objective of the amendment is to create a Board of Trustees that more closely follows the principles of equitable & shared governance of a public institution, in the best interests of the faculty, students, administration and alumni of Penn State.



Sample BOT Reform Letters

Join PSU-ReBOT on Facebook

“LIKE” our public PSU-ReBOT News Page

Follow @psu_rebot on Twitter



Dear PSU Trustee,

Happy New Year!

Last year turned out to be a very trying year for Penn State and rather than dwell on all of that, I would prefer to focus on the positive and move forward from all the mistakes that made the Sandusky scandal the “Biggest PR Disaster of 2012” [source: <http://goo.gl/xE3Fh>].

In order for Penn State to move forward in a meaningful and constructive way, it will need to take responsibility for its failures and that’s going to involve some significant governance reform. As an Executive Team member of PSU-ReBOT.org (Penn Staters Reforming the Board of Trustees), I know that Penn State governance is far out of step, compared to over 60 other Land-Grant Universities and 11 Big Ten Universities.

In working with Jack Wagner, we provided input to his reform recommendations and urge that you support them. Below is a list of reforms that are a must (there are a great deal more, but embracing these might help put some “trust” back in the word “Trustee”):

1. It is untenable to have the President both report to the Board and be a voting member. He should be an ex-officio, non-voting member. He should also not be Secretary.
2. In order to avoid any conflicts of interest, real or perceived, the Governor should not be a voting member, rather an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Board.
3. A quorum should be defined as a simple majority (half the Board +1).
4. At 32, the size of the Penn State Board is far too great. Jack calls for 21, but peer-review shows that 14 is the average number of voting members for all other Land-Grant Universities.
5. Term limits should be shortened to 9 years.
6. Penn State should practice what it preaches regarding openness and fully comply with the State’s “Right to Know” laws.

As a graduate of EMS, and like President Erickson, I have a great love for my alma mater and sincerely hope that you can take the right steps to help Penn State move forward from the calamity that besmirched our great University.

Thank you for your consideration.

Cheers,



Dear Trustee So-and-So;

It is apparent to even the casual observer that the current structure and membership of the Penn State Board of Trustees has not served well the best interests of Penn State University since before the Sandusky scandal exploded on the scene. Auditor General Wagner's recommendations for reforms are at minimum what you and other current Board members should publicly affirm and recommend:

- a. The President of PSU should not be a member.
- b. The Governor should be a non-voting member only.
- c. A quorum should be half of the members plus one.
- d. The board should be reduced to twenty-one voting members.
- e. Term limits should mandate nine years at maximum, and any current member having reached that maximum must be unable to serve after the end of his current term.
- f. Penn State needs to fully comply with the State "Right to Know" laws.

The current Board configuration is a dinosaur, and needs to be become smaller, and thus more capable of responding to a crisis situation.

May I also suggest that this board needs to expedite the search and hiring process so that a new full-time Athletic Director and a new President can begin to provide more stability and experienced professionalism to those vital positions.

Regards,



Dear Board of Trustees:

Please consider strongly the recommendations of Auditor General Wagner regarding the structure and procedures of the board. It is imperative that the following modifications be considered as Penn State moves forward to a new era of maintaining its stellar reputation. Change needs to be embraced within the board of trustees. "Without change, something sleeps inside us, and seldom awakens. The sleeper must awaken." (F. Herbert). May our pride continue to flourish for our great institution.

For your consideration:

- 1) It is untenable to have the President both report to the Board and be a voting member. He should be an ex-officio, non-voting member. He should also not be Secretary.
- 2) In order to avoid any conflicts of interest, real or perceived, the Governor should not be a voting member, rather an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Board.
- 3) A quorum should be defined as a simple majority (half the Board +1).
- 4) At 32, the size of the Penn State Board is far too great. Mr. Wagner calls for 21, but peer-review shows that 16 is the average number of voting members for all other Land-Grant Universities.
- 5) Term limits should be shortened to 9 years.
- 6) Penn State should practice what it preaches regarding openness and fully comply with the State's "Right to Know" laws.

What is the most pivotal element that distinguishes a Penn State graduate from any other alma mater? It's an irreplaceable bond that is established among all alumni once "I'm a Penn State grad" enters into conversation. Please allow myself and fellow alumni to be proud of our Board in creating a new paradigm for all Penn Staters!



Dear XXXX,

As a business professor and consultant for the last nineteen years, it is my professional opinion that the Penn State Board of Trustees is in desperate need of governance reform.

As you know, Pennsylvania Auditor General Jack Wagner has thoughtfully developed a set of reform recommendations. As a two-time Penn State alum, I urge you to publicly and forcefully support Mr. Wagner's recommendations. In particular, I want to highlight six changes that, if implemented, would facilitate important and much-needed improvements in governance:

- 1) It is poor practice for the president of the university to both report to the board and be a voting member of the board. S/he should be an ex-officio, non-voting member. This will eliminate potential conflicts of interest.
- 2) In order to avoid potential conflicts of interest, the Governor of Pennsylvania should not be a voting member. Instead, s/he should be an ex-officio, non-voting member.
- 3) A quorum should be defined as a simple majority (> 50% of the board).
- 4) At 32 members, the board is much too large. Mr. Wagner calls for 21 members. The average for land-grant universities is 16. The board should be downsized by at least one-third.
- 5) Term limits for board members should be set at 9 years.
- 6) Penn State should practice transparency by fully complying with the Pennsylvania's "Right to Know" laws.

Thank you for your time,

Note: The most important elements are sincerity, brevity, clarity, and civility. You want to be clear and quick about why you're writing, and you don't want to be dismissed as a “complainer”.

If you intend to use any of the sample letters, we recommend that you change the opening paragraph and add something about why reforming Penn State governance is important to you, so that your offering comes off as YOUR letter, and not a straight copy of someone else's. Even changing only the first sentence of a sample letter will likely do the trick.

www.psu-rebot.org

Helping to make Penn State Better

