Questions about College Affordability: Governing Boards of Public Colleges and Universities

Members of governing boards of public colleges and universities should have the resources they need to make more informed decisions about college affordability. These are questions that board members should ask themselves and the institutions they govern.

My Role

- Do I have a clear understanding of the state’s higher education goals and how the institution’s mission aligns with those goals?
- Do I understand how to balance my fiduciary duty to the taxpayers I represent with the policies and practices of the institution I govern?

The Institution’s Business Model

- Do I know how much it costs to educate a student at the institution?
- What are the differences in cost by degree level and by program?
- Do I know how the institution earns its revenue?
- Do I know how the institution spends its revenue?
- Do I know how the institution ensures operational efficiency while improving academic quality?
- Do I know how the institution ensures that the cost of future investments in educational quality and student success don’t unnecessarily get passed on to students and families?
- Do I have the information I need to make decisions about the fiscal sustainability of the institution?

Tuition and Fees

- Do I understand how tuition and fees are determined at the institution?
- Do I understand the potential impacts of changes in tuition and fees that I approve?
- Do I have opportunities to hear from students, families, and members of the public before I make decisions about tuition and fees?

Affordability for Students and Families

- Do I know how much grant or scholarship aid students receive?
- Do I know how much students pay out-of-pocket to attend?
- Do I know how many take out student loans?
- Do I know how much debt they accrue when they leave—whether they graduate or not?
- Do I know how many of them repay their student loans?
- Do I know how many of them default on their loans?
- Do I know if they earn a living after they graduate?
- Do I know if there are differences based on a student’s race, ethnicity, or family income?

For more information about Partners for College Affordability and Public Trust and how to make high-quality, affordable college education a reality for all Americans, visit www.pcapt.org.