

## Education Working Group

*Chair:* Jack Maguire, Chairman, Maguire Associates

*Coordinator:* Sean Gallagher, Program Director & Senior Research Analyst, Eduventures

### Case Study

#### *A Call to Serve: Impacting Education Through Board Service*

The education sector is a critical driver of Massachusetts' economy, and the Commonwealth is distinguished by its high concentration of world-class colleges and universities, and some of the best public K-12 education systems and private schools in the nation. Yet, business leaders' ability to impact the education sector is less direct than in other domains where corporate initiatives and activities have an inherently more tangible connection to policy (e.g., energy, health care). Recognizing the importance of education on quality of life, civic engagement, and workforce development, progressive business leaders have a desire to impact educational policies and outcomes.

Educational institutions of all types and at all levels are in great need of savvy business leadership and management oversight as they compete for resources, funding, and students in a tighter fiscal environment and a more competitive marketplace. Business leaders are in a unique position to make a personal and corporate contribution to educational policy and outcomes through board service: lending their expertise and experience to educational institutions as a member of boards of directors, boards of trustees, and advisory boards. The challenge for business leaders is how to navigate this landscape of opportunity where no "how to" guide exists.

This brief case study draws on the deep experience and understanding of board service held by Jack Maguire, Chairman of Maguire Associates and the PBLN's Education Working Group Chair. Jack has served as a Trustee of the United Cerebral Palsy Association, The College Board, and three institutions of higher education in the U.S. and abroad, as well as the chairman of the Lexington, Massachusetts School Committee. By highlighting some of the major lessons learned and best practices' from Jack's experience and his firm's research on board service and trusteeship, this case study fulfills an important element of the PBLN's mission: encouraging and assisting the contribution of PBLN members to unpaid public-private boards, commissions and tasks forces in ways that best leverage PBLN Members' expertise and interests. Through board service in education, progressive CEOs and top officers can apply their progressive values and leadership to benefit their companies, broader society, and public policy.

Jack's experience suggests that it is important for prospective board members to understand the context and expectations for board service in education. For trusteeships in higher education, the most common ways that business leaders become board members include the recommendation of another board member, or the recommendation or appointment of the president, institution, or an elected official. At both public and private colleges and universities, more than half of board members are alumni of the institution: this suggests that in some cases, alumni status is an important avenue to board service, but in almost as many cases, one not need to a graduate of the institution to

#### *Profiled Executive Bio*

***Dr. John ("Jack") Maguire, Chairman and Founder, Maguire Associates***

#### **Education**

Ph.D., Theoretical Physics, Boston College

#### **Past Positions**

Dean of Admissions, Boston College  
Post-Doctoral Fellow in Physics, Rice University

#### **Board Service**

United Cerebral Palsy Association (Trustee)  
The College Board (Trustee)  
Boston College-Ireland, Dublin (Trustee)  
New England College (Trustee)  
Lexington School Committee (Chairman)

Jack Maguire is the Chairman and Founder of Maguire Associates, a leading international consulting firm for colleges and universities. His firm has been a market research pioneer specializing in higher education for nearly three decades, during which he has consulted for hundreds of College and University Presidents and Boards. He is a former Dean of Admissions at Boston College, where he introduced market research to the field of admissions in the early 1970's, inventing the field of "enrollment management."

serve on its board. According to research conducted by Jack's firm, Maguire Associates, most college board members (60%) have no prior higher education board experience, and the vast majority serve on the board of only one college at a time. In addition, it should be noted that many board positions come with fundraising expectations – that is, the expectation that board members will make annual donations to the institution. Although required donations are fairly rare, it is an “unspoken rule” of board service that each member should contribute financially, whether through cash or in-kind services. According to Jack, “Typically, universities will require that you make an annual contribution, and it’s important to have a shared understanding of those expectations up-front.”

Jack's experience as trustee, chairman, board member and researcher suggests that a critical element of board service: – and a point that is too often overlooked – is preparation and orientation. Maguire Associates research indicates that 40% of college trustees say that they were “only slightly, or not at all prepared” for their board service. According to Jack, “It’s critical that board members selected have a serious orientation, so that they can understand the governance structure and mission of the institution. Educational institutions are quite different from businesses.” Prospective board members should take time to get to know and observe the institution and its operation, and if possible, have a personal orientation by the president or chief executive. A strong orientation and a good relationship with the chief executive are critical factors behind successful board service.

Successful boards are well-balanced, bringing together expert executives with knowledge of and experiences in marketing, finance, fundraising, and academics. Thus, business leaders with specialization in a particular business domain can add great value to the operation of an educational institution. Financial and fundraising skills are particularly valued in today's landscape of tighter budgets and increased private fundraising. Approximately ¼ of college trustees report that their primary area of expertise on their board is budget issues and management.

#### **Maguire Associates**

Maguire Associates of Concord, MA, is a research-based consulting firm serving educational institutions and organizations exclusively. The firm applies innovations in market research, analysis, and predictive modeling to help clients understand the dynamics of past performance, apply insightful knowledge to sound decision-making and goal-setting, and attain future outcomes that are critical to their health and vitality. Maguire Associates was founded in 1983 by Chairman Jack Maguire, the creator of enrollment management, and has since worked with more than 350 educational institutions worldwide.

While the experience that a board member brings from their firm or industry is important, Jack suggests that prospective board members must be careful to recognize and avoid potential conflicts of interest, which are more of a concern than ever in a more sensitized governance environment.

Notably, Jack's research and personal experience evidence “a need for more progressive leadership” on education boards – particularly since alignment between board members' and the institutions' values and philosophies is a driver of efficacy and success. As Jack emphasizes, “There is a huge gap between the profile of a typical college president and a trustee: most trustees' values are not as progressive as the presidents, and if there were more progressive trustees, it would be a better match.”

As one might expect, the “network effect” of serving on a board is quite powerful, with a great variety of potential business connections resulting. In their work together, board members are sharing best practices and perspectives with each other, which can be highly beneficial to developing new skills, ideas, and viewpoints.

In addition to being professionally rewarding, board service can be highly personally rewarding, as a key avenue for progressive business leaders to impact broader society beyond the domain of their firm or industry. As Jack emphasizes in summarizing his personal experience serving on boards, “Board service is one of the most rewarding things I've ever done – and improving the quality of education makes a huge difference and great impact in keeping the U.S. a world leader.”

*A panel session at the PBLN's October 26<sup>th</sup> conference will extend on this case study and further explore best practices and opportunities in board and trusteeship service. Importantly, as an outcome of this session, the PBLN hopes to connect interested business leaders with specific opportunities for board/trusteeship service and impact.*

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