

QUALITY FOCUS ESSAY

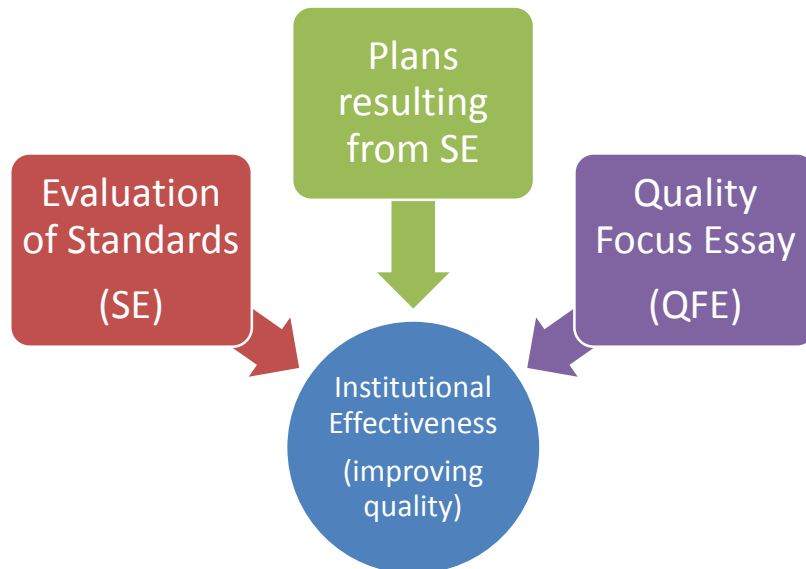
INTRODUCTION

The Quality Focus Essay (QFE) is born out of the College’s self-evaluation and is an opportunity for colleges to further study and take action in areas that need widespread institutional change, development, or improvement and have the potential to impact student outcomes. To complete the work on the quality focus essay, the College reviewed the requirements and expectations contained in the Manual for Self-Evaluation and the Guide to Evaluating and Improving institutions.

Evergreen Valley College embraced the forward-looking self-evaluation process and the opportunity afforded through the QFE to explore quality improvements and foster a culture of innovation that inspires the entire campus community. To ensure the greatest impact of individual efforts, the College strategically utilized its existing accreditation steering committee, representative of all campus constituencies, to review and further develop potential action projects for the QFE.

During the accreditation self-evaluation process, Evergreen Valley College (EVC) engaged in reflective and authentic conversations to identify action projects appropriate for the Quality Focus Essay (QFE) that would support the College’s efforts to fulfill its mission by improving student learning and achievement. Through the College’s analysis and reflection, and a commitment to improving quality, thematic elements resonated throughout the standards that pointed to areas of needed change, expansion, development, and/or improvement.

The following QFE sections are specifically based on format for the QFE as set forth in the ACCJC Guide for



Evaluating and Improving Institutions (July 2015 Edition). EVC’s QFE will begin by describing the process for identifying the campus action projects, listing the measurable outcomes for each project, and aligning the projects with the accreditation standards. Then, tables for each of the identified projects will include action steps, timeline,

responsible party(s), and needed resources. Finally, the essay concludes with EVC's plan for assessing the outcomes and effectiveness of the action projects.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evergreen Valley College has identified two areas for further study and improvement to enhance academic quality, institutional effectiveness, and excellence. The specific description of the projects, action steps, goals/outcomes, timeline, college leads and resources needed to meet the action projects are set forth below in detail.

PLANNING-INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Goal: Strengthen the structure and processes for institutional effectiveness

The focus on the creation of an Office of Institutional Effectiveness will bolster decision making at the institution, provide the necessary research and evaluation bandwidth to provide more consistent and credible evidence for program review and institutional analysis of progress on the mission, and foster a culture of inquiry and innovation.

COMMUNICATION

Goal: Strengthen communication to facilitate a more cohesive college community

The focus on creating a more strategic communication infrastructure will better disseminate information to all constituent groups regarding new directions, processes, and desired outcomes and provide more frequent and greater focused dialogue about student learning and achievement.

IDENTIFICATION OF ACTION PROJECTS

Evergreen Valley College's Accreditation Steering Committee met a minimum of three times per semester to review progress on the self-evaluation. In early 2016, two emerging themes were identified that would develop into the QFE action projects. These themes covered multiple standards and were themselves interconnected. The themes were shared with the campus community during the January 2016 professional development day, which began the dialogue for feedback and development of the action projects. During February 2016, these thematic elements evolved into the College's QFE Work Plan, which was developed through feedback from the members of the Accreditation Steering Committee, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), Academic Senate, College Executive Leadership, and the joint District Accreditation Meeting group. By the middle of March 2016, the QFE work plan was endorsed by the College Council and Academic Senate, and focus on action project refinement began.

Through the analysis of the College's self-evaluation of the accreditation standards and feedback from college constituencies, Evergreen focused on the following two action projects for the QFE: Planning-Institutional Effectiveness, and Communication.

To message and facilitate dialogue around the College's QFE, EVC utilized a creative messaging avenue by developing a [QFE animation](#). The animation was shared with the Chancellor and Board of Trustees in summer

2016 and with the campus community at college opening day in August 2016. For the external community, the QFE animation and essay is linked on the College accreditation webpage, along with the Self-Evaluation report.

The two action projects that EVC identified are outlined in detail in the following sections.

ACTION PROJECT 1: PLANNING-INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Goal: Strengthen the structure and processes for institutional effectiveness

During the self-evaluation process, the College's commitment to fulfilling its mission was evident throughout the standards. The mission clearly directs institutional priorities and, through the integrated plan, grounds the institutional decision-making process. Similarly, in assuring academic quality and institutional effectiveness, the College utilizes student learning and achievement data to evaluate its effectiveness in meeting its mission. This is accomplished through the College's ongoing cycles of program review, SLO assessment, and annual reporting on equity, student success, and student achievement measures.

Currently, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), as charged by the College President, is the primary governance body facilitating the College's planning and institutional effectiveness efforts. In spring 2016, the IEC evaluated the College's planning activities and reported on the College's progress in achieving its mission. In analyzing these activities, validation of what the College discovered through the self-evaluation of the standards occurred as the College recognized that, although existing College planning activities are structured to support institutional effectiveness, in order to have greater institutional impact, sustainable structures and systems are needed to create a lasting culture not contingent on individual efforts alone. Furthermore, to facilitate the College's maturity in the integration of data into College planning efforts, EVC is identifying ways to improve practices to establish additional infrastructure that will increase the capacity of data driven institutional effectiveness. The College began this process through the IEC's *evaluation of college planning processes* and the *Progress on the Mission Report*, which both lead to recommendations.

In March and April 2016, the IEC evaluated the college's planning processes, through a survey administered to members of key planning governance committees and College council. The survey process was intended to engage in a broad based, systematic evaluation of its integrated planning efforts. (See Standard 1B.8, Standard 1B.9) Five areas of planning were investigated in the survey: 1) Membership Size and Balance, 2) Training and Support, 3) Efficiency, 4) Decision-Making, and 5) Communication. A final open-ended question was added to permit free response from the members on issues presented in the survey questions as well as issues that the members felt were relevant for consideration. The report communicated the results of the assessment and evaluation activities so that there is a shared understanding about the strengths and areas of improvement and thus set appropriate priorities. (See Standard 1B.8) Two recommendations culminated from the results of the survey, with the planning recommendation in bold.

- 1. The College will provide annual committee chair training including alignment of committees to integrated planning.**
2. Facilitate communication within committees as outlined in the College Quality Focus Essay (QFE).

Over the past accreditation cycle, the College has made significant improvements to its work on identifying student learning outcomes and using findings to improve teaching and learning. The College's Institutional Effectiveness Committee has also improved program review efforts and the review of larger institutional measures of achievement, such as course completion, transfer, and other metrics. While the efforts are noteworthy, the College has determined that a better infrastructure is needed for the access and use of data and to help improve integrated planning. The College took time in 2015 to create a master plan, and is using 2016 to flesh out this new master plan. Three key efforts were taken to use evidence to move forward: the creation of an implementation plan for the Master Plan, an examination of its processes and systems, and a review of the progress on the mission.

For EVC, the 2016 *Progress on the Mission Report* serves two key purposes. First, the document functions as a progress report to document the status of the work on each strategic initiative and mission function of the College. Second, the report provides a summary of the efforts to date to begin a more robust attempt to analyze institutional effectiveness and academic quality under the new Educational Master Plan. The Report will help guide the efforts to move forward under the new integrated planning model and the Quality Focus Essay.

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee considered all College efforts to meet the institutional mission and divided the findings in 6 categories.

1. Progress Made through Program Review
2. Progress on Student Learning
3. Progress on Student Success and Achievement (Institutional Set Standards)
4. Progress Made Through Student Supports (SSSP Plan)
5. Progress Made in Issues of Equity (Equity Plan)
6. Progress on Basic Skills

The IEC reviewed the action steps of the office, department, or group assigned responsibility for each specific area and captured their adjustments, plans, and efforts to better meet the mission. To ensure implementation of the identified activities that will move the College toward meeting the mission and strategic initiatives, the IEC examined the identified timelines, plans, and measures for progress, and identified the following planning related recommendations for the College:

1. Develop an integrated matrix and document that tracks progress on each of the college areas of meeting the mission and integrates the findings cohesively. For example, equity tracking of course completion and transfer should be aligned with the institutional set standards.
2. Embed larger institutional success measures into program review data templates.
3. Expand existing efforts to establish program set standards in 2016/2017. (Identify early adopters and programs already setting standards, and for remaining programs, establish timelines for setting program standards).
4. Merge the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership goals (IEPI-stretch goal) of the State of California with the California Scorecard metrics (actual college rates) and the Institutional-Set Standards (baseline standards).
5. Create a dashboard that tracks progress towards the mission in a visually appealing manner.

Through the College's self-evaluation of the standards and the analysis of existing institutional effectiveness measurements, the College concluded the overall goal for action project 1: Planning-Institutional Effectiveness is to *strengthen the structure and processes for institutional effectiveness*. The action project for planning-institutional effectiveness has the potential for widespread institutional change and simultaneously maintains past successes, enhances current undertakings, and charts the course for future directions including establishment of a campus Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The project outcomes are outlined in the table below.

Desired Outcomes	Alignment with Standards	Reference
Refine infrastructure for institutional planning and resource allocation	1A.2	Use of Data to Assess Progress on Mission
	1B.9	Systematic Evaluation and Planning
	3C.3	Technology Resource Allocation
	3D.1	Financial Resource Allocation
	3D.3	Fiscal and Budgetary Planning
Operationalize long term and short term institutional planning timelines	1A.4	Regular Review of Mission
	1B.9	Systematic Evaluation and Planning
Align campus activities utilizing the integrated plan	1B.4	Alignment of Plans to Improve Learning
	1B.6	Use of Data to Address Learning and Success Gaps
	1B.8	Setting Priorities Based on Assessment Results
	1B.9	Systematic Evaluation and Planning
	3C.2	Technology Planning
	3D.2	Integrated Financial Planning Based on Mission
Monitor Institutional Set Standards for achievement and report improvements	1B.3	Evidence-based Goal Setting
Establish evaluation plan and timeline for planning activities and college processes	1B.7	Regular and Systematic Review of Policies and Procedures
	1B.9	Systematic Evaluation and Planning
	3D.8	Evaluation of Financial Systems
	4A.7	Evaluation of Governance Roles and Systems

Desired Outcome	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Party	Resources
Refine infrastructure for institutional planning and resource allocation	1. Develop Integrated Planning Manual (IPM)	1.Summer 2016	1. Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC)	No new resources needed for this effort. Existing resources can be repurposed for this action.
	2. Establish campus office of Institutional Effectiveness- Dean & researcher; Centralize the efforts of the college research to EVC directly.	2016-2017	-VPAA -HR -MSCC	IIIA Human: Hire a Dean of Institutional Effectiveness; Centralize the research analyst to campus based activities IIIB Physical: <i>Office Space</i> IIIC Technology: Software and computer support. IIID Financial: Funding for the dean position
Operationalize long term and short term institutional planning timelines	1. Implement operational planning calendar, including yearly research agenda	Fall 2016	IEC, Institutional Effectiveness (IE) dean when hired	No new resources needed for this effort. Existing resources can be repurposed for this action.
	2.Operationalize Educational Master Plan	Spring 2017	IE Dean	No new resources needed for this effort. Existing resources can be repurposed for this action.
	3. Operationalize campus Integrated Planning Manual (IPM)	Spring 2017	IE Dean	No new resources needed for this effort. Existing resources can be repurposed for this action.
Align campus activities utilizing the integrated plan	1. Integrate existing campus plans (SSSP, Equity, EMP...)	2016-2017, Ongoing	IEC IE Dean Student Success Committee	No new resources needed for this effort. Existing resources can be repurposed for this action.
	2. Post plans and share results to the Institutional Effectiveness website	Spring 2017, Ongoing	IE Dean Participatory Governance Committees, President	No new resources needed for this effort. Existing resources can be repurposed for this action.
	3. Increase use of data to inform changes in practice	Spring 2017 plan for 17/18, Ongoing	President, IE Dean, Participatory Governance Committees, President	No new resources needed for this effort. Existing resources can be repurposed for this action.
Monitor Institutional Set Standards for achievement and report improvements	1. Establish method for monitoring of institution-set standards for student achievement and reporting improvements	Fall 2016 Report Spring 2017	President, IE Dean, College Council and IEC	No new resources needed for this effort. Existing resources can be repurposed for this action.
	2. Identify responsible member or committee to monitor/report progress	Spring 2017	President, IE Dean, College Council and IEC	No new resources needed for this effort. Existing resources can be repurposed for this action.
Establish evaluation plan and timeline for planning activities and college processes	1. Incorporate into IPM	Spring 2017	IE Dean, President, Participatory Governance Committees.	

ACTION PROJECT 2: COMMUNICATION

Goal: Strengthen communication to facilitate a more cohesive college community

The self-evaluation process revealed that the College, through its regular institutional processes, reports, and actions, facilitates significant opportunities to discuss all aspects of important topics. In particular, campus faculty, administrators, and staff participate in substantive, sustained, collegial dialogue about student outcomes, student equity, academic quality, institutional effectiveness, and continuous improvement of student learning and achievement occur regularly through both formal and informal means. Similarly, through the College's shared governance structure, there are established standards for decision-making at all levels of the organization and decisions are widely communicated across the campus on a regular basis using various methods including committee agendas, minutes, and other updates. Administrators and committees with campus-wide bearing distribute documents through email to all members of the campus community, including part-time faculty. In addition, newsletters and other forms of information are utilized to keep the campus community aware of changes and trends.

Although effective communication processes exist, in order to maximize the College's successful innovations and improvement of student outcomes, a more strategic communication infrastructure is needed to better disseminate information to all constituent groups regarding new directions, processes, and desired outcomes. The College believes that building communication infrastructure will facilitate reporting between shared governance entities and the District Office, and increase the quality of the dialogue among the campus community. The College validated this need through its recent evaluation of planning processes. In spring 2016, the College conducted a planning effectiveness survey. Five decision-making governance committees completed the survey and the following recommendations were noted, with the communication recommendation noted in bold.

1. The College will provide annual committee chair training including alignment of committees to integrated planning.
2. **Facilitate communication within committees as outlined in the College Quality Focus Essay (QFE).**

As previously mentioned, the survey was administered to the members of College governance committees and the College Council. Five areas of planning were investigated in the survey: 1) Membership Size and Balance, 2) Training and Support, 3) Efficiency, 4) Decision-Making, and 5) Communication. A final open ended question was added to permit free response from the members on issues presented in the survey questions as well as issues that the members felt were relevant for consideration.

Of particular interest to this portion of the QFE are the responses related to communication. The majority of members disagreed or were neutral that communication between the committees and council were effective. The majority of members also disagreed or were neutral that communication between the committees were effective. Three open ended responses indicated that communication in the committee/council structure could be improved.

The self-evaluation process, followed by the campus evaluation, revealed that although the College has communication processes in place, further study is needed to identify authentic opportunities for improvement. A pivotal first step is to identify a global picture of EVCs communication practices to understand what is working

well and what areas can be refined as well as explore different methods of communication that have the potential to reap the greatest impact. The College will undertake these activities as part of Action Project 2: Communication with the overall goal to *strengthen communication to facilitate a more cohesive college community*. The College believes that the action project for communication has the potential for widespread institutional change, affording the College the opportunity to celebrate successes and authentically discuss its areas for quality improvement, and ultimately lead to improved student outcomes. The project outcomes are outlined in the table below.

Desired Outcomes	Alignment with Standards	Reference
<i>Establish a global picture of EVC's current communication procedures</i>	1B.1	Dialog about Learning and Equity
	4A.1	Innovation
	4A.3	Roles in Decision Making
	4D.6	District and College Relations
<i>Establish Campus Communication Plan- two way</i>	1B.9	Systematic Evaluation and Planning
<i>Establish Campus Communication Plan- two way:</i>	4D.6	College and District Communication
	1B.9	Systematic Evaluation and Planning
<i>Facilitate reporting between shared governance entities (bidirectional)</i>		
<i>Facilitate reporting between shared governance entities (bidirectional)</i>	4A.3	Clear Roles in Decision Making
	4A.5	Consideration of Varied Perspectives
<i>Increase frequency and quality of dialogue</i>	4A.6	Documented Processes for Decision Making
<i>Increase frequency and quality of dialogue</i>	1B.1	Dialogue about Learning, Equity, Quality
	1B.8	College-wide Communication of Planning
	1B.9	Systematic Evaluation and Planning
	2A. 11	Program Learning Outcomes
	2A. 12	General Education Outcomes

Desired Outcome	Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Party	Resources
Establish a global picture of EVC's current communication procedures	Conduct Needs Assessment to define strengths and weaknesses of college communication 1. conduct focus groups with constituents 2. Assess effectiveness of student communication 3. Assess internal-including DO and external communication	2016-2017	President, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness (IE), College Council	Existing Human, Physical, Technology, and Financial resources will be repurposed to meet this action step.
	Follow up on Planning Effectiveness 2016 recommendations *training committee chairs *Facilitating communication between committees	Fall 2016, Ongoing	Professional Development Center (PDC), Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), College Council	Existing Human, Physical, Technology, and Financial resources will be repurposed to meet this action step.
Establish Campus Communication Plan	-internal communication *messaging campus changes *communication with DO *committee communication -external communication *messaging to students *messaging to community	2017-2018, Ongoing	President, College Council, communication advisory group (constituents and DO representation)	Existing Human, Physical, Technology, and Financial resources will be repurposed to meet this action step.
Facilitate reporting between shared governance entities (bidirectional)	-Revise shared governance handbook	Summer/Fall 2016	Staff Development Chair, Academic Senate College Council	Existing Human, Physical, Technology, and Financial resources will be repurposed to meet this action step.
	-Conduct committee chair training including integrated planning activities	Fall 2016	Professional Development Center (PDC), Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), College Council	Existing Human, Physical, Technology, and Financial resources will be repurposed to meet this action step.
Increase frequency and quality of dialogue	Create time and space for dialogue	Fall 2016, Ongoing	President, College Council, Academic Senate, Dean of IE and researcher	Existing Human, Physical, Technology, and Financial resources will be repurposed to meet this action step.
	Facilitate "culture of inquiry"- use data to inform change	Fall 2016, Ongoing	President, College Council, Academic Senate, Dean of IE and researcher	Existing Human, Physical, Technology, and Financial resources will be repurposed to meet this action step.

IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

The two action projects identified by the College provide support for existing institutional efforts to enhance student learning and achievement in two key ways. First, the action projects will bolster the College's existing efforts to examine qualitative and quantitative data to measure progress on the institutional mission as set forth in the through strategic goals and objectives identified in the 2016 College Master Plan. The increased access and use of data at the institutional, programmatic, and on-the-ground operational levels will assure that decisions are based on evidence at all levels. The greater the reliance on evidence to make decisions, the greater the likelihood that the College's interventions and efforts will improve learning and achievement at the course, program, and institutional levels. Second, the increased number and quality of opportunities for dialogue about the evidence will build greater organizational learning and widen the collaborative contributions from all voices at the College about learning and success. The greater the ownership of the data and outcomes by the faculty, staff, and administration, the greater the knowledge, the increase in motivation, and the design of college structures that will support the College's efforts.

The College will connect the action project steps to specific measures of learning and success as the action projects take shape. The College will examine annual as well as longitudinal, cohort-based measures of achievement. The College will also identify tipping point measures that identify momentum markers that accelerate success to the final exit outcomes of degree and certificate completion, transfer to baccalaureate institutions, and immediate employment.

ASSESSMENT OF ACTION PROJECTS

Evergreen Valley College will annually evaluate advancement towards the goals of the QFE, progress on the two Action Projects, and the effectiveness of the QFE processes, timeline, and cycles. The assessment on the QFE begins with an analysis of the internal processes and systems to provide a foundation for embedding the plan into existing college-wide processes and systems and for advancing student learning and achievement. Through this process, the QFE becomes a critical component in college operations and the foundation for the institution's mid-term report.

EVC will evaluate the specific actions that the College intends to take in order to achieve the goals identified in the QFE and make appropriate adjustments and improvements based on the yearly findings. As a result of review of the findings, EVC will refine as necessary its key processes and structures to improve student learning and achievement.

Each year, the College will generate a progress report on the objectives and recommend improvements to process. The report will include:

- An analysis of the data to identify strengths and areas for innovation and improvement, comparing performance to trend data at the College.
- Identification of links to existing governance and planning processes
- Plans to address areas for improvement.

Specifically, the annual QFE report will cover the:

1. Analysis of progress on Action Projects and steps, including:
 - a. Progress summaries from the responsible parties
 - b. Evaluation and modification of the measurable outcomes
 - c. Work of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee on the progress on goals
2. Integration of Action Projects with other institutional plans and interventions
3. Discussion and assessment of overall progress on the Actions Projects based on the analyses
4. Recommendations for modifications to the Action Projects
5. Solicitation and incorporation of campus feedback on recommendations as appropriate

The assessment review begins at the outset of each academic year to build college governance and operations. The assessment process takes a broad look at college-wide efforts over the entire academic year to provide a holistic assessment of the plan.

TIMELINE AND PROCESS FOR ASSESSING THE QUALITY FOCUS ESSAY

SEPTEMBER 2016, 2017, 2018

The Accreditation Liaison Officer will convene the Accreditation Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will develop a process for soliciting feedback on the components of the QFE from the key governance bodies and offices who are directly involved in implementing the plan and reviewing the processes. The EVC College President will provide and report the vision for and progress on the QFE action projects at the beginning of the academic year.

OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2016, 2017, 2018

The Steering Committee will work with the college researcher to solicit feedback and assess progress toward achieving its stated goals and make decisions regarding the improvement of student learning and success in an ongoing and systematic way. Assessment is embedded in existing college processes, including program review, integrated planning, resource allocation and decision-making and include qualitative and quantitative data. The College will identify annual, longitudinal, and momentum point measures of success and learning based on the action steps. Measures will be identified at the institutional, program and operational levels of analysis. Baseline measures will be established in the 2016-2017 Academic Year. Cohorts will use existing state measures, but locally identified cohorts will be created specific to the EVC Mission in 2016 and 2017.

DECEMBER 2016, 2017, 2018

The EVC College President will provide a progress report to College Council.

JANUARY THROUGH FEBRUARY 2017, 2018, 2019

The researcher and the ALO will bring together all of the feedback and generate a summary report for the Steering Committee and appropriate college committees. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee, through the College Council will distribute the report and the Steering Committee and appropriate committees will review the findings.

MARCH THROUGH APRIL 2017, 2018, 2019

The Steering Committee and appropriate college committees will evaluate the findings recommend innovations where appropriate.

MAY 2017, 2018, 2019

The Steering Committee will report the progress on the QFE goals and action projects to the college community. The President will provide reports to the college and the community.

JUNE 2017, 2018, 2019

The Steering Committee will present progress to the College Council, the Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC), for review and approval at the end of each academic year. The IEC will ensure that the College is making progress on institutional effectiveness measures. The Steering Committee will hold a debriefing of the previous year's progress and begin planning the activities and efforts for the next academic year.

A report on the progress of the action projects will be made to the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees by the President.