

# **Visiting Committees Handbook**

## **Purpose**

The Visiting Committees were created by the Board of Trustees for the purpose of serving as links between the University and its many constituencies, professional and general, and public and private by providing continuing counsel to the Board of Trustees and the President of the University pertaining to academic and administrative matters within the area charged to each committee. They are responsible solely to the Board and the President. The Visiting Committees have no direct management functions with respect to internal university decision making, but should act as advocates of the University to the community-at-large.

The duties of the Visiting Committees are as follows:

1. Shall advise and consult with Trustees, academic and administrative officers, faculty and students of the University.
2. Shall have continuing knowledge of programs, problems, needs and mission of assigned area.
3. Shall keep the Trustees and President regularly informed of findings and recommendations.
4. Shall interpret the mission of the college or department of the University to the general public.
5. Shall encourage informal communication between departments and visiting committees.

## **Agenda and Objectives**

The work of an effective, substantive Visiting Committee will be based on stated objectives, just as an efficient, orderly committee meeting will be based on a carefully planned agenda. Shortly after being appointed, the Chair will be sent, by the Secretary to the Board of Trustees, all data available relevant to his or her particular charge, including previous Visiting Committee reports, comments on previous reports, and any additional material from the Administration concerning the disposition of the Committee's recommendations.

The first meeting of a Visiting Committee should be devoted to the development of appropriate objectives. The following objectives established by the Committee on Visiting Committees in 1992 have continued to be used:

1. Develop an enhanced awareness of the University's mission, goals and objectives with active participation in the College strategic planning process.
2. Increase community awareness of CSU as a comprehensive urban institution and develop community linkages within the greater Cleveland and northeastern Ohio area, with particular emphasis on minority communities and City of Cleveland students.
3. Improve student recruitment and retention within the greater Cleveland and northeastern Ohio area, with particular attention to minorities and City of Cleveland students.
4. Promote academic and research excellence, including identification and development of selective areas of excellence.
5. Encourage the development of academic programs, including new programs at the graduate and professional level, and continue to evaluate programs at all academic levels.
6. Maintain and improve instruction:
  - a. audit student-teacher interaction
  - b. share expertise in classroom directly with students, and
  - c. assist in the recruitment of outstanding new faculty, with particular emphasis on minorities and women
7. Assist with accreditation processes.
8. Develop resources and private and public funding support for the University.
9. Provide career development counseling, job placements, and opportunities for internships and co-op programs.
10. Encourage the expansion and enhancement of cooperative interactions between Cleveland State University and other educational institutions within Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and the Midwest region.

Chairmen of Visiting Committees should appoint subcommittees from the committee membership, each charged to explore thoroughly a particular objective. Subcommittees can be augmented from time to time with experts as appropriate. Subcommittees should have the opportunity to explore in depth a particular issue, initiative or matter of importance.

## **Relations with Colleges or Departments**

As the Harvard College Visiting Committee Procedures handbook has stated:

The effectiveness of any Visiting Committee depends on its close and informal working relationships with the school or department to which it is assigned. There must exist between the two a feeling of mutual trust, openness and confidence: the Visiting Committee, on the one hand, having assurance that the department welcomes and encourages its inspection, the department, on the other, having no fear that it is being subjected to unfair or destructive examination. The visitors should feel at ease with the department; they should not be embarrassed or inhibited about what they are asked. Only if a constructive relationship is encouraged, can the Visiting Committee help the department. To maintain good rapport will call upon the energies of all committee members. It requires that Visiting Committee chairmen communicate with the departments through the year.

Though concern, interest and support of the visitor for the department is surely a concomitant of service on a Visiting Committee, it is not a substitute for dispassionate appraisal, and this should not be lost sight of in the camaraderie of association with faculty and students.

The Board is looking for a reasoned, independent analysis of the area as a whole, or of one or more problems that have been identified within the area, depending upon the point in the visitation sequence reached. At the same time, they ask that those serving on Visiting Committees bear in mind the limits of their authority.

They are not members of the University faculty or administration, nor are they replacements for them. The job of the committee is to understand, and occasionally to help identify, the department's

mission or goals and to assess how well these are being met. Where problems are discovered that need attention, they should be brought to the notice of the Board and the administration through the report.

Visiting Committees should not lose sight of the responsibilities of the senior administration, which may preclude actions that seem desirable from the point of view of the individual department.

It is also as well for Visiting Committees to be aware that the universal complaint from all departments is insufficient funds...[R]eiteration by all committees that more money is the solution to all problems is not effective.

## **Nomination of Visiting Committee Members**

Visiting Committees and Chairs may, and are encouraged, to nominate candidates for Visiting Committee membership. Appointment will be by the Board of Trustees Committee on Visiting Committees. Members of the faculty, administration, staff or currently enrolled students may not serve on Visiting Committees.

At least four essential criteria govern selection of members to visiting committees:

- a. Competence in or knowledge about the special area being served and the respect of colleagues in that field.
- b. Interest in public higher education, the mission of the University, and its relevance to community needs and problems.
- c. Adequate time to devote to give committee assignments and willingness to accept this responsibility.
- d. Character – meaning integrity, responsibility, objectivity, trustworthiness, and loyalty to the University.