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Leadership Crises in the Board Room

Preparing for Unanticipated Challenges
and Opportunities

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The Challenges and Opportunities Facing Boards of ABHE Institutions: Overview

- The increasing challenges facing private, faith-based institutions.
- The reality that too many Boards of Trustees discover too late that their institution is facing missional fidelity and operational viability challenges.
- The missional and fiduciary responsibilities of Trustees often is unclear with accountabilities for leadership undefined.
- Warning signals of institutional destabilization.
- Preparations to address unanticipated challenges and opportunities – the need for “margin” – “strategic preparing” as well as “strategic planning”.
- Tapping Trustees strengths to multiply administrative resources to address the challenges and opportunities.

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Challenges and Opportunities

- Declining interest in full/formal degree programs.
- Inability to keep compensation at reasonable and competitive levels with most institutions consuming upwards of 70% of their operating budget on personnel.
- Fixed operating costs increasing at double digit levels.
- Perceived lack of affordability. Questions about ROI.
- The numerical decline of traditional age college students.
- A shift to nonresidential modalities.
- Donor fatigue and/or deflection to “special interests” that may not support the core essentials of the institution’s educational priorities.
- Other factors which raise serious questions about the relevance, effectiveness and value of Christian higher education to serve the leadership needs of the Gospel today and tomorrow.

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A Day Late and a Dollar Short

- The reality that too many Boards of Trustees discover too late that their institution is facing missional fidelity and operational viability challenges.
- Lack of attention to both mission drift and mission irrelevance.
- No margin in terms of funds, time and personnel to respond proactively to unforeseen challenges and unanticipated opportunities – the difference between strategic planning and strategic preparing.
- Not asking the right questions about fidelity and viability.
- Not getting the full and transparent reports and actionable data needed to validate the delivery of missional promises.

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Warning Signals of Institutional Destabilization

- Steadily declining enrollments
 - Lack of perceived quality
 - Irrelevance to constituent needs
 - Unfulfilled expectations in terms of missional promises - retention
 - Staff/Faculty turnover & retention “melt” not fully understood – BCW tool.
- Shortfalls in net revenues (too much spending on institutionally funded scholarships).
- Decline in donor commitments/loyalty.
- Administration’s resistance to answer difficult questions about mission faithfulness and operating viabilities.
- Conflicts between the CEO and core stakeholders not addressed.

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Shared Governance Confusions

- The missional and fiduciary responsibilities of Trustees often are unclear with accountabilities for leadership undefined.
- Frequently Boards are uninvolved in monitoring effective accountabilities of leadership performance:
 - Not wanting to inappropriately “touch God’s anointed” – good leaders are hard to find and keep,
 - Confusion over the difference between governing and managing,
 - Lack of expertise among Board members to ask the right questions and understand the most important data (key performance indicators) that ensure missional fidelity and operational viability,
 - The tendency of leaders to focus on positives of victories/successes and minimize negatives of trends, failures or mistakes – how does the Board evaluate true “success”?

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Called & Equipped Board Members are the Key to Addressing the Crises in the Board Room

- Board members who have a clear and compelling call to serve the mission of the institution.
- Board members able to ask the right questions and give the best counsel because they have the right mix of experiences and expertise in those areas essential to ensure mission fidelity and operational viability – the Board Profile and Board member evaluations.
- Board members who understand the nature of “shared governance” supporting the CEO while holding him/her accountable for the most important things.
- A CEO who sees the Board as partners in, as well as ultimate stewards of, the institution’s missional promises.

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Serving the Present Age and Beyond

- Education is a “futures business” – four walls and a roof with tomorrow inside of it!
- Christian educators we are called to equip the current and the next generation of leaders for Great Commission fulfillment with Great Commandment motivation.
- The future is perhaps more unpredictable in terms of challenges and opportunities than in any time in our lifetime.
- Our institutions need “called leadership” who *seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness* (Mt. 6:33) confident that *faithful is He who has called us who also will equip* (1 Thes. 5:23-24) us to serve for times like these and those to come.

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Follow-up

In addition to the resources you will find on the ABHE website at xxx, please know I am available to answer questions, as well as provide you with a copy of this power point, by contacting me at leadershiptlt@gmail.com

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