

The Role of the Board of Directors

The responsibilities of the board, administration, faculty, and staff are formally stated in the articles of incorporation and bylaws. The board's authority is linked with its responsibility for the stewardship of the Seminary. A few general maxims may help indicate the role of board.

1. The stewardship of the seminary involves the faith we confess and the truth we seek, the people we serve and the people who serve here, the resources we develop and use, and the management of the assets of the school.

Every member of the board is called to be a good steward of all these treasures (see the AGB Book, Good Stewardship) in partnership with congregations, supporting synods, and Division for Ministry of the ELCA.

2. The board has final authority in all areas specified in the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of Luther Seminary.

This authority will generally be exercised through the faculty, staff, and administration under the oversight of the board.

The administration will offer or supply any information or interpretation that the board needs or requests. In confidential matters dealing with personnel or difficult issues, the president may divulge critical information only to the chair of the Board or the executive committee. But the entire board will decide who needs to know what, and the administration will supply the information as far as necessary, prudent, and legally possible.

3. The board and administration play a critical role in shaping the faculty and may take an active stance in monitoring the program's effectiveness in preparing people for ministry and in holding the seminary accountable to the standards of the faith.

The faculty are called to be teachers of the church, and their vocation will be honored.

The goal is to call the best faculty, support them in their calling, and put their gifts to the best use for the church and its ministry.

4. The students are entrusted to the seminary from the congregations of the church, and they return to serve and lead in the church. They are not mere consumers of the educational product, but people whose vocations are stewarded by the seminary. This may involve the faculty, administration, and board in hard choices and discipline. It will always require respect of the students and their gifts for ministry.

5. The board is responsible for policy, oversight, support, and advocacy of the seminary and its mission. The president, deans, and vice-presidents are charged with administration. The board must be able to know the difference between policy and administration. In turn, the administrative officers must be accountable to the president, who accounts to the board.

Expectations of Directors

- Take an active interest in the mission of Luther Seminary. Support the school, the students, faculty, staff, and president with your prayers.
- Attend the meetings of the board regularly and come prepared by a thorough review of the materials circulated in advance of the meeting.
- Contribute your wisdom and judgment freely without insisting upon private agenda or taking offense at disagreements.
- Support the seminary with financial gifts, careful management of expenses, and encouragement of others to give.
- Ask questions in the confidence that you deserve a straight answer and may need one to make a critical judgment.
- Rally to the public support of the seminary and its president in times of crisis or public criticism. Critique the seminary and performance of the president within the walls of the board meeting when that is required, and elect and dismiss the president if the welfare of the seminary necessitates it.
- Advocate the mission of the seminary in the synods, the division for ministry, the pastors, the congregations, and other agencies of support.

Expectations of the President with Regard to the Board of Directors

- Welcome all members of the board with full respect for their gifts, commitments, and competence to serve. Give thanks to God for their presence and honor their diverse vocations, backgrounds, and contributions.
- Strive to make the most of the board meetings with regular attention to providing whatever the board needs.
- Lead the board in articulating the mission of the seminary and listen to the board's counsel.
- Deal fairly and openly with tensions and disagreements, and do as the board says.
- Manage the resources of the seminary as frugally and effectively as possible.
- Tell the board what it wants and what it needs to know.
- Respect the authority of the board, listen to criticism with as little defensiveness as possible, and put the welfare of the seminary and its mission ahead of self-interest.
- Advocate the mission of the seminary in the synods, the division for ministry, the pastors, the congregations, and other agencies of support.

This document describing the roles and responsibilities of a seminary board of directors is provided by Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota (www.luthersem.edu).