

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 070 410

HE 003 645

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TITLE Student Participation on Institutional Governing Boards.
INSTITUTION American Council on Education, Washington, D. C.
PUB DATE 27 Oct 72
NOTE 14p.; Higher Education Panel Report, American Council on Education, Survey Number 11

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *College Students; Educational Administration; Governance; *Governing Boards; *Higher Education; *Student Participation; *Student Role

ABSTRACT

The results of this survey on student participation on college and university governing boards indicate that 14% of all institutions in the U.S. have students as members of their boards. Of the different institutional types, and public 4-year colleges and universities stand at one end of the scale with about one in four including students on their governing boards, and the 2-year colleges stand at the other, with only 8% of the public and 6% of the private 2-year colleges having students on their boards. Of the 86% of the institutions that do not now have students as members of their boards, 63% indicated either that they have had no plans for considering the possibility or that they have considered the possibility but are taking no definitive action. Concerning the possible authority students have as members of governing boards, of the 14% of institutions that do have students on their boards, less than half permit voting on all issues and 58% indicated that students were not permitted to vote on any board issues. (HS)

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Higher Education Panel Report American Council on Education

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Survey No. 11

October 27, 1972

Student Participation on Institutional Governing Boards

Barbara A. Blandford

In June 1972, the United States Congress enacted the higher education bill (Public Law 93210), which included the following statement: "It is the sense of the Congress that the governing boards of institutions of higher education give consideration to student participation on such boards." Subsequently, several higher education associations received inquiries from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare asking them for information and policy views on the "sense of Congress" statement. Though most have responded to the question on policy views, the associations felt that available information on the present status of students on governing boards was inadequate. Therefore, in response to their concern, the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities asked the Higher Education Panel of the American Council on Education to conduct a survey to assess the extent of student participation on institutional governing boards and to learn more about such related questions as: How many institutions have students on their governing boards at the present time? How many are planning such a move? What means are used to include students on the boards? What authority do students hold on boards? What is the attitude of board members toward student participation?

Assisting in the preparation of this report were Don Abshire, John Creager and Joan Trexler.

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At the end of August of this year, a questionnaire (Appendix A) was mailed to the Higher Education Panel representatives at 491 colleges and universities. This sample included all institutions that are members of the Panel, except for those that are "duplicates" in the sense that they have the same governing board as some other member institution (i.e., the various campuses of the State University of New York). With the questionnaire was sent a letter requesting that the president of the institution complete the form; it was believed that the president would be the person best informed on the composition and attitudes of the board. After the return of 430 questionnaires (88 percent), the data were tabulated and weighted to represent the entire population of institutions in the United States. (See Appendix B for an account of the sampling and weighting procedures.)

Results

The results of this survey (shown in Tables 1 - 3) indicate that 14 percent of all institutions in the United States have students as members of their governing boards. Table 1 shows that, of the different institutional types, the public four-year colleges and universities stand at one end of the scale, with about one in four including students on their governing boards, and the two-year colleges stand at the other, with only 8 percent of the public and 6 percent of the private two-year colleges having students on their boards. Among the reasons given by institutional presidents for not including students as members of their boards is the following statement from the president of a four-year private college:

We feel we have a better system [students on all board committees]. It permits student participation without some of the questionable consequences in a situation in which students actually sit on the board. . . . There are real problems when some people have a special "in"

on the board and others do not. Finally, should a president be responsible to a student? Some consideration occasionally needs to be given to the authority of the president if [the president] is going to be held responsible -- and [the president] is!

Another comment came from the president of a two-year private college:

This president is adamantly opposed to the basic philosophy of student or employee representation on the Board.

Of the 86 percent of the institutions that do not now have students as members of their boards (Table 2), 63 percent indicated either that they have had no plans for considering the possibility or that they have considered the possibility but are taking no definitive action. In addition, 65 percent of these institutions said that they have alternative means for involving students in board decisions. These means vary considerably (as Table 2 shows) but the most common (used by 30 percent) is student membership on board committees; another 9 percent said that a designated student liaison sat with the board. Although the questionnaire item asked for alternative means "of a consistent and formal nature," some institutions listed means that can only be called informal and unsystematic: e.g., students invited to meetings where appropriate (12 percent), student government or a representative thereof invited to all meetings (12 percent).

Concerning the possible authority students have as members of governing boards, of the 14 percent of institutions that do have students on their boards, less than half permit voting on all issues and 58 percent indicated that students were not permitted to vote on any board issues. By far the largest proportion (75 percent) of these institutions had only one student board member and these student members sat on the board at most of these institutions (45 percent) by virtue of the office held (e.g., student government president).

The typical term of office for student members (at 81 percent of the institutions) is one year, whereas the typical term of office for nonstudent members (at 63 percent of the institutions) is four to six years.

One-fourth of these institutions reported the practice of having student board members began in 1970. At only 30 percent of the institutions was student board membership initiated in the four year period of 1966 - 1969.

Of all institutions surveyed (Table 1), 45 percent indicated that most of the nonstudent members of their boards were either unfavorable or highly unfavorable toward the matter of student membership. Another 27 percent of all institutions indicated a highly favorable or favorable attitude among the nonstudent board members. Finally, 28 percent of the respondents said they could not judge the attitude of the board. However, although this is not reflected in the tables, 93 percent of those institutions that have student members on their boards indicated they were either highly favorable or favorable toward student membership, while only 16 percent of those institutions without students on their boards felt this way.

Interpretation

The results of this survey seem to indicate that, although institutions are now including students on their boards more than they did in the past, those who do are still a small minority. The great majority are using various alternative means to involve students in decision making on the board level. Moreover, very few intend to include students on governing boards. It is also clear that, even in cases where students do hold board membership, they serve chiefly as advisors rather than as policy-makers. As earlier quoted comments illustrate, many college presidents feel student membership on boards

to be inappropriate. Underlying the "sense of Congress" statement is another issue mentioned by various of the respondents. It centers on the principle of institutional autonomy and freedom from governmental interference. Many college presidents feel that Congress, through its statement, has violated that principle and has done so without any solid justification of accountability or responsibility.

Although it is the sense of this survey that institutions will not, in great numbers, include students on their governing boards, this survey provides a base of data that may be used in a few years to determine any trends in the inclusion of students on institutional governing boards.

Table 1

Distribution of Selected Item Responses by Type and Control:
Total Population
(Based on Weighted Estimates)
N=2,554

Item	All Institutions		Predominantly White Institutions				Predominantly Black Institutions			
	Institutions		Public		Private					
	Total Public [2554]	Private [1274]	2-Year [786]	4-Year Univ. [327]	2-Year [232]	4-Year Univ. [921]				
Type of Governing Board Serving Institution										
Single governing board	77.0	57.9	96.1	66.7	46.5	29.9	93.8	97.0	89.2	81.7
Multicampus governing board	23.0	42.1	3.9	33.3	53.5	70.1	6.2	3.0	10.8	18.3
Number of Members on Governing Board										
10 or fewer	37.5	70.9	3.9	80.4	58.3	52.8	4.7	4.1	00.0	22.4
11 - 20	22.3	23.6	21.0	15.7	34.2	34.4	36.8	18.4	00.0	37.3
21 or more	40.2	5.5	75.2	3.9	7.5	12.7	58.5	77.6	100.0	40.2
Method of Selecting Board Members										
Self-perpetuating	39.2	.9	77.7	00.0	2.5	3.3	67.9	78.2	96.5	46.2
Appointed	30.6	59.1	2.1	43.1	87.5	82.7	00.0	2.8	00.0	32.4
Governor	75.7	78.4	00.0	63.6	92.5	93.5	00.0	00.0	00.0	65.4
Church governing body/constituency	2.8	00.0	83.4	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	83.4	00.0	00.0
State or local government	17.4	18.0	00.0	31.8	3.3	6.5	00.0	00.0	00.0	34.7
Other*	4.2	3.7	16.6	4.5	4.3	00.0	00.0	16.6	00.0	00.0
Elected	29.4	39.3	19.4	56.9	7.5	14.0	27.4	18.9	3.5	21.4
State or district voters	58.2	85.3	00.0	89.7	33.3	32.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	71.9
Church governing body/constituency	25.3	00.0	79.5	00.0	00.0	00.0	100.0	70.3	100.0	28.1
State or local government	10.0	14.7	00.0	10.3	66.7	68.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0
College corporation	6.5	00.0	20.6	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	29.7	00.0	00.0
Other**	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	2.5	00.0	4.7	00.0	00.0	00.0
Provision for Student Membership on Board										
Yes	14.3	13.3	15.3	7.8	24.7	23.9	6.2	17.4	10.8	12.0
No	85.7	86.7	84.7	92.2	75.3	76.1	93.8	82.6	89.2	88.0
Board Attitude Toward Student Membership										
Highly favorable	7.2	6.1	8.2	5.9	7.9	5.5	6.2	7.8	00.0	18.0
Favorable	20.1	20.9	19.3	17.6	27.2	23.9	11.4	21.3	10.8	27.4
Unfavorable	37.6	29.5	45.9	25.5	33.6	46.7	48.2	45.3	64.5	23.2
Highly unfavorable	7.4	9.5	5.3	9.8	12.4	3.3	3.1	5.5	13.9	00.0
Cannot judge	27.7	34.0	21.3	41.2	18.8	20.6	31.1	20.2	10.8	31.3

* "Other" includes superintendent and college corporation.

** "Other" includes state regents appointed by the governor, district trustees elected by the voters.

Table 2

Distribution of Selected Item Responses by Type and Control:
 Institutions Without Student Members on Board
 (Based on Weighted Estimates)

Item	All										
	Institutions					Predominantly White Institutions					Predominantly Black Institutions
	Total Public	Private	Public	2-Year	4-Year Univ.	2-Year	4-Year Univ.	Private	2-Year	4-Year Univ.	
[2189]	[1110]	[1079]	[724]	[246]	[91]	[218]	[761]	[60]	[89]		
<u>Expect Student Membership To Be Considered</u>											
No	45.1	44.0	46.2	44.7	47.4	44.2	59.2	46.1	31.6	9.5	
Has been considered; no affirmative action	17.5	15.8	19.2	8.5	31.2	33.0	7.2	18.3	55.9	28.5	
Yes, but not for some time	11.9	8.9	15.0	8.5	6.6	6.6	13.3	15.6	12.5	22.9	
Yes, to be discussed soon	6.3	4.6	8.0	4.3	3.8	6.6	10.5	6.8	00.0	18.4	
Yes, now under full consideration	5.0	4.0	6.0	2.1	3.3	6.6	3.3	7.0	00.0	20.8	
Other*	14.3	22.8	5.6	31.9	7.7	2.9	6.6	6.1	00.0	00.0	
<u>Alternate Means for Involving Students</u>											
No	35.1	34.7	35.6	38.3	26.7	13.2	47.0	32.2	23.4	58.7	
Yes	64.9	65.3	64.4	61.7	73.3	86.8	53.0	67.8	76.6	41.3	
Students members of board committees	30.1	20.5	40.1	24.1	8.6	13.3	21.9	45.9	35.7	38.9	
Students invited where appropriate	11.9	10.5	13.4	10.3	11.3	11.7	9.4	13.9	10.7	16.5	
Designated student liaison on board	9.2	10.1	8.3	6.9	11.3	27.8	3.1	9.3	00.0	16.5	
Student government attends	12.3	18.1	6.2	20.7	12.4	15.3	7.2	6.8	00.0	11.5	
Student committees meet with board committees	5.4	8.0	2.6	10.3	3.4	7.6	00.0	1.5	22.0	00.0	
Council of students advises board	5.0	7.1	2.9	00.0	23.6	11.0	3.1	3.2	00.0	00.0	
Elected student representative on board	6.4	10.2	2.5	13.8	4.5	4.5	12.5	.6	00.0	00.0	
Other**	19.7	15.5	24.1	13.7	24.9	8.3	42.6	18.9	31.6	16.5	

* "Other" includes "considered, but alternate methods applied"; "student eligible to run in public election."

** "Other" includes "student attendance encouraged at meetings"; "students meet with board committees"; "recent alumni are members of the board"; "Board's committee on students meets with students"; "upperclassmen and recent graduates elect one member annually to Board"; "President invites student government to meet with Board informally"; "student/faculty committee makes recommendations to Board"; and "joint committees appointed where appropriate."

Table 3

Distribution of Selected Item Responses by Type and Control:
 Institutions With Student Members on Board
 (Based on Weighted Estimates)

Item	All										Predominantly Black Institutions [13]	
	Institutions		Predominantly White Institutions				Black					
	Total Public [365]	Private [170]	2-Year [62]	4-Year [80]	Univ. [28]	Private [15]	2-Year [160]	4-Year [7]	Univ. [7]			
<u>Number of Student Members on Board</u>												
One	74.6	95.2	56.4	100.0	89.9	100.0	00.0	65.3	67.8	00.0	00.0	00.0
Two	14.3	00.0	27.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	75.3	22.1	00.0	00.0	00.0	50.0
Three	6.3	00.0	11.9	00.0	00.0	00.0	24.7	6.9	32.2	00.0	00.0	50.0
Four	2.1	00.0	3.9	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	4.8	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0
Five or more	2.6	4.8	.7	00.0	10.1	00.0	00.0	.9	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0
<u>Students Permitted to Vote on:</u>												
All issues	41.3	36.8	45.3	00.0	69.7	23.0	24.7	49.8	64.5	00.0	00.0	00.0
Some issues	.4	00.0	.8	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	1.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0
No issues	58.3	63.2	53.9	100.0	30.3	77.0	75.3	49.2	35.5	00.0	00.0	100.0
<u>Student Members Selected by:</u>												
<u>Specific board designee by virtue of office held</u>												
General student election	45.1	52.2	38.8	50.0	42.0	86.4	00.0	45.5	35.5	00.0	00.0	00.0
Student government nomination	18.3	4.8	30.2	00.0	10.1	00.0	00.0	31.4	32.2	00.0	00.0	50.0
Other*	20.9	20.3	21.4	50.0	00.0	13.6	100.0	13.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	50.0
	15.7	22.7	9.6	00.0	47.9	00.0	00.0	10.2	32.2	00.0	00.0	00.0
<u>Average Board Term for Student Members</u>												
One year	80.9	77.1	84.3	75.0	70.7	100.0	75.3	86.1	35.5	100.0	100.0	100.0
Two years	12.4	14.5	10.6	25.0	11.7	00.0	24.7	9.1	32.2	00.0	00.0	00.0
Three or more years	6.7	8.4	5.1	00.0	17.6	00.0	00.0	4.8	32.2	00.0	00.0	00.0
<u>Average Board Term for Nonstudent Members</u>												
Three or less years	22.9	00.0	43.1	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	44.6	00.0	00.0	00.0	100.0
Four to six years	63.1	86.6	42.4	100.0	79.8	77.0	75.3	40.1	100.0	00.0	00.0	00.0
Seven or more years	14.0	13.4	14.5	00.0	20.2	23.0	24.7	15.4	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0
<u>Student Membership Required by Board Bylaws</u>												
Yes	54.3	53.8	54.6	50.0	47.9	78.9	100.0	51.7	35.5	50.0	50.0	50.0
No	43.5	41.4	45.3	50.0	42.0	21.1	00.0	48.2	64.5	00.0	00.0	00.0
Do not know	2.2	4.8	00.0	00.0	10.1	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0	00.0

Continued.....

Table 3
(Continued)

Item	All Institutions		Predominantly White Institutions		Predominantly Black Institutions					
	Total		Private							
	Public	Private	Public	Private						
<u>Year First Student Served on Board</u>	[365]	[170]	[195]	[62]	[80]	[28]	[15]	[160]	[7]	[13]
1966 - 1969	30.1	39.4	21.9	50.0	30.3	42.2	00.0	23.5	67.8	00.0
1970	24.9	19.6	29.6	25.0	10.1	34.8	75.3	26.2	00.0	50.0
1971	22.7	22.1	23.2	00.0	42.0	13.6	00.0	24.3	00.0	50.0
1972	22.3	18.9	25.3	25.0	17.6	9.4	24.7	27.0	32.2	00.0
<u>Student Members Serve on Board Committees</u>										
Yes	68.2	61.9	73.8	50.0	69.7	65.2	24.7	80.5	64.5	50.0
No	31.8	38.1	26.2	50.0	30.3	34.8	75.3	19.5	35.5	50.0

* "Other" includes board nomination, appointed by the governor, appointed by the president, elected by student/faculty senate.

Appendix A

CONFIDENTIAL

American Council on Education
Higher Education Panel Survey No. 11

Student Participation on Governing Boards

1. Please indicate the type of governing board that serves your institution by checking the appropriate item below:

Single governing board: Legal responsibility for the direct control and operation of a single institution or campus. _____

Multicampus governing board: Legal responsibility for the direct control and operation of more than one institutional unit (with or without a statewide coordinating agency or local advisory boards). _____

2. How many members serve on the governing board? [Include ex officio] _____

3. Please indicate whether more than one-half of your governing board's total membership is: [Check one item]

a. Self-perpetuating (determined by the board itself) _____

b. Appointed (by whom? _____) _____

c. Elected (by whom? _____) _____

d. Other (please specify: _____) _____

4. Is there currently any provision for student membership on the governing board of your institution? Yes _____
No _____

If "Yes," go to item #5.

If "No": Do you expect such membership will be seriously considered by the board or the appointing authority? [Check one item]

a. No _____

b. The matter has been fully considered with no affirmative action _____

c. Yes, but probably not for some time _____

d. Yes, it will be discussed soon _____

e. Yes, it is now under full consideration _____

f. Other (please specify: _____) _____

Does your institution have any alternative means (of a consistent and formal nature) for involving students in board decisions (committee membership, a designated student liason invited to board meetings, etc.)?

a. No _____

b. Yes (please specify: _____) _____

5. If students currently hold membership on your board, please respond to the items below. If not, skip this question and go to item #6.

- a. How many students are members of the board? _____
- b. Are the student(s) on the board permitted to vote on: _____
 - 1) All issues? _____
 - 2) Some issues? _____
 - 3) No issues? _____
- c. How are student members selected? [Check one item] _____
 - 1) General student election _____
 - 2) Specific designee by virtue of office held (e.g., student government president) _____
 - 3) Student government nomination _____
 - 4) Board nomination _____
 - 5) Other (please specify: _____) _____
- d. What is the average term of office for student members (in years)? _____
- e. What is the average term of office for nonstudent members (in years)? _____
- f. Is student membership required by the board's official bylaws? [Check one item] _____
 - 1) Yes _____
 - 2) No _____
 - 3) Not currently, but will be soon _____
 - 4) Do not know _____
 - 5) Other (please specify: _____) _____
- g. In what year did the first student(s) serve on your board? _____
- h. Do student members serve on board committees? _____
 - 1) Yes _____
 - 2) No _____

6. Insofar as it is possible for you to express an opinion that reflects the attitude of most of the nonstudent members of your board toward the matter of student membership (voting or nonvoting), how would you evaluate their current sentiments?

- a. Highly favorable _____
- b. Favorable _____
- c. Unfavorable _____
- d. Highly unfavorable _____
- e. Cannot judge _____

* * * * *

Thank You!!

Please return this form by September 8, 1972 to: Higher Education Panel, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036 [return envelope provided].

Respondent's Name

Respondent's Title

Area code: # _____

Respondent's Telephone Number

Appendix B

Sampling and Weighting Issues

The population of interest in this survey consists of 2,554 institutions of higher education. This includes the 2,543 institutions in the American Council on Education's 1971 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) and 11 independent medical schools. Usable responses were obtained from 430 of the 491 members of the Panel to whom questionnaires were mailed, for a response rate of 88 percent. The population of institutions was sorted into the 36 cells of the 1971 CIRP stratification design (see The American College Freshman: National Norms for 1971, ACE Research Reports, Vol. 6, No. 6, 1971) and tentative weights for each stratum (cell) were computed by dividing the number of population institutions in the stratum by the number of sample institutions in that stratum. Following inspection of the participation and weights in each cell, it was decided to combine certain cells and recompute weights for the combined cells. The final 29-cell structure, participation counts, and weighting factors are shown in Table B-1.

The frequency data from each institution were weighted in accordance with its cell membership and combined across institutions within a reporting category (institutional type by control):

$$\hat{f}_k = \sum_{i,j} W_{ij} f_{ik}$$

where i indexes the institution
where j indexes the stratum
where k indexes the reporting category
where m_k is the number of sampled institutions in the category

The estimate of item response percentage in a category was obtained by dividing the frequency estimate, so obtained, by the number of institutions in the category and multiplying by 100.

The absolute standard errors for such percentages vary with the magnitude of the percentage being estimated and are maximal for 50 percent. Ignoring the effect of stratification, but taking into account the fact that

sampling was done from a finite population, the standard error can be estimated as:

$$\sigma_{\%} = \sqrt{\frac{PQ}{N_k}} \cdot \sqrt{1 - \frac{M_k}{N_k}}$$

Where N_k is the number of population institutions in the category

The relative sampling errors may be estimated by dividing the absolute sampling error by the estimated categorical percentage. Generally, the absolute errors will be somewhat larger for the reporting breakouts than for all institutions combined. Some idea of the magnitude of error may be obtained by noting that for the estimated percentage of all institutions having some student membership on the governing board:

$$\begin{aligned}\sigma_{\%} &= \sqrt{\frac{(14.3)(85.7)}{430}} \cdot \sqrt{1 - \frac{430}{2554}} \\ &= \sqrt{\frac{1225.51}{430}} \cdot \sqrt{1 - .1684} = \sqrt{2.8500(.8316)} = \sqrt{2.379} \\ &= 1.54\end{aligned}$$

The 95 percent confidence limits ($\pm 1.96\sigma$) are ± 3.02 , so that the population parameter estimated at 14.3 percent probably lies 11.3 - 17.3 percent.

Table B-1

Stratification Design and Cell Weights

Stratification Cell For Sampling	Number of Institutions		Cell Weight
	In Population	In Sample	
Public University			
Selectivity:			
1. Less than 550	72	12	6.00
2. 550-599	31	8	3.88
3. 600 or more	16	6	2.67
Private Universities			
Selectivity:			
4. Less than 550	18	7	2.57
5. 550-599	14	6	2.33
6. 600 or more	35	15	2.33
Four-Year Public Colleges			
Selectivity:			
7. Less than 450 or unknown	188	23	8.17
8. 450-499	66	7	9.43
9. 500 or more	73	12	6.08
Four-Year Private Nonsectarian			
Selectivity:			
10. Less than 500 or unknown	238	22	10.82
11. 500-574	38	6	6.33
12. 575-649	50	28	1.79
13. 650 or more	45	32	1.41
Four-Year Catholic			
Selectivity:			
14. Less than 500	62	19	3.26
15. 500-574	72	15	4.80
16. 575 or more	39	9	4.33
17. Unknown	45	7	6.43
Four-Year Other Sectarian			
Selectivity:			
18. Less than 450	56	11	5.09
19. 450-499	54	13	4.15
20. 500-574	73	29	2.52
21. 575 or more	54	34	1.59
22. Unknown	95	8	11.88
Two-Year Colleges			
23. Public	786	51	15.41
24. Private-Freshmen Enroll <250	163	15	10.87
25. Private-Freshmen Enroll 250-499	50	14	3.57
26. Private-Freshmen Enroll 500+	19	4	4.75
Predominantly Black Colleges			
27. Public Four-Year	36	5	7.20
28. Private Four-Year	49	8	6.13
29. Two-Year	17	4	4.25