

Considerations for Granting Emeritus Status

There are better ways to honor and, as appropriate, continue to involve former trustees, while also adhering to the higher standards demanded of boards today.

If a trustee who is leaving the board has deep expertise that is still needed (e.g., certified public accountant) and has the time for a continued role, invite that individual to serve on the appropriate board committee (e.g., audit and compliance). The former trustee would still need to meet any other criteria set by the board or committee, such as attendance requirements, independence and conflict of interest disclosures.

Serving on another board within the system can be an effective way to leverage a trustee's connections. For instance, a trustee who is leaving the parent board could be asked to serve on the foundation board, assuming they meet that board's selection criteria and expectations. Some subsidiary boards meet less frequently than parent boards, and their focus is narrower, so it may be an easier commitment.

Former trustees are valuable members of advisory councils to the CEO. For example, some hospitals and systems are creating community councils. These coun-

cils, composed of different types of community leaders, provide input about the health needs of their community while maintaining connections between the hospital and the community.

'If You Must' Guidelines

If, after a robust discussion, the board decides to continue emeritus status, it should adhere to these guidelines to decrease the potential negative impact on the board's overall performance:

- Be selective; do not offer emeritus status to everyone leaving the board.
- Use clear, objective criteria to determine who is eligible.
- Create a short term and use term limits (e.g., one two-year term).
- Modify the bylaws to clearly describe the role including expectations for attendance, participation and fundraising (if applicable).
- Commit to revisiting the issue of emeritus status in two years.

Adapted from "Is Trustee Emeritus Status Outdated?" by Pamela R. Knecht, CEO, Accord Limited (*Trustee Insights*, February 2020). [Click here](#) to read the entire article.