UALBANY SEEKS NONPROFIT BOARDS FOR STUDY ON GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS

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The theme of the spring 2011 nonprofit governance course in the University at Albany's Department of Public Administration at Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy is board effectiveness. To increase understanding of this complex concept and to increase governance effectiveness, the college is looking for six to 10 boards to participate in a free board self-assessment facilitated by graduate students acting as board consultants. This academic service learning experience will take place between January 26 and May 3, 2011.

The board assessment approach offered through the course is based on the generally accepted proposition, supported by prior research, that boards of nonprofit organizations should routinely assess their own performance (Gill, 2005; Holland, 1991; Murray, 2005). Empirical studies investigating this claim have shown that boards that engage in the practice of self-assessment are more effective than those that do not (Herman and Renz, 2004; Holland, 1991; Paton, Foot and Payne, 2000).

In return for your participation, you can expect a high quality report along with best practice advice on how to improve effectiveness from a review of the findings in the nonprofit governance literature.

Participating boards should expect the following level of engagement with the graduate student consulting team:

Initial meeting with the executive director and board chair or with the board chair and a senior volunteer responsible for the activities of the organization if it is voluntary.

Access to the board chair as a point of contact and coordinator of the self-assessment.

Access to information about the organization and board, including background, mission and strategic direction and board minutes for at least two consecutive meetings.

Participation in a 15-minute confidential online board self-assessment effectiveness survey. A link to the survey will be sent to the board chair for dissemination to the board. The board assessment is designed to involve constituents beyond the boardroom if desired (e.g. include internal and external stakeholders that interact with the board).

Observation of a board meeting.
Meeting with the board to communicate assessment results.

If your nonprofit board is interested in participating in the study, please contact Dr. Yvonne Harrison, assistant professor of public management for the Rockefeller College of the University at Albany, at 518.442.4001 or yharrison@uamail.albany.edu

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