Memo

To: Executive Committee  
Athens State University Board of Trustees

From: Macke Mauldin, Chair

Date: July 22, 2015

Subject: Annual review of President Robert Glenn

To provide the Board of Trustees with a more comprehensive evaluation of Dr. Glenn, the Board of Trustees engaged AASU-Pension Center to conduct an on-site review of Dr. Glenn. Dr. Steve Reno of AASU-Pension conducted the on-site portion of the evaluation and Dr. Patricia Cormier assisted him.

Attached is the full evaluation including Background, Conduct of the On-Site, Findings, and Recommendations for your review. Today I met and reviewed these with Dr. Glenn. In general, I agree with all of the observations, findings and recommendations of the report. Dr. Glenn and his entire team at Athens State University have accomplished a great deal within the past three years. In addition to becoming an autonomous institution, the University is adapting very well to the technology of education while providing academically challenging courses to meet the needs of the post-recession economy. In addition to discussing all the great achievements of the University, I discussed in detail the following issues with Dr. Glenn:

- We reviewed the substantial and remarkable progress Dr. Glenn and the University made during the past three years. (See Attached Report)
- The board’s members need to be more fully engaged and responsive. Additional training on our role as a board and our responsibilities as board members is warranted. Dr. Glenn will secure an appropriate consultant to provide that training at the board retreat in April of 2016.
- To continue to improve and enhance Dr. Glenn’s effectiveness leading the University, Dr. Reno has recommended a series of small, candid and carefully facilitated conversations with groups of faculty and staff. I am requesting Dr. Ron Ingle to research appropriate external consultants that can facilitate these conversations as a way to help foster transparency and mutual respect among the Board, administration, faculty and staff.
- Dr. Glenn should continue to devote appropriate resources and encouragement to develop courses that are academically robust and meet the needs of our students both in format and availability.
- Dr. Glenn should continue to provide leadership and appropriate resources to enhance student recruitment and student retention. He has already brought in an outside consultant to do a marketing audit and has registered for an AASCU Presidential Institute on Enrollment Management.
• The void in leadership created with the retirement of Rick Mould needs to be filled quickly. The anticipated loss of his leadership in the political arena needs to be addressed in a new vice president. Dr. Glenn is to seek appropriate alternatives both short and long term to ensure that the University doesn’t lose its momentum at the State level.

• The University has changed substantially in the past five years. We are now an independent board in a dramatically changing education landscape. Change is difficult and hard. In addition to these changes, the demands of the pending SACS-COC and ACBSP reviews, and the recent NACTE review, issues surrounding the previous Provost became too volatile and distracting to the University. Dr. Glenn agrees he should have made changes in leadership sooner and those delays caused division between staff, faculty and administration.

• There is a clear need for a strong Academic Provost who possesses the necessary skills to reinvigorate collegiality on campus. Dr. Glenn and the search committee expect to open the search in late summer and receive applications through the fall. Given the strength of the Interim Provost and the importance of the position to the University, we agreed selecting the appropriate individual is far more important than timing.
AASCU-Penson
Center for Professional Development

Presidential Evaluation: Robert (Bob) K. Glenn, PhD
Athens State University, Athens, Alabama
June 24-26, 2015

Prepared by
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Presidential Evaluation: Robert (Bob) K. Glenn, PhD
Athens State University, Athens, Alabama
June 24-26, 2015

Background

The Board of Trustees, in concurrence with Dr. Robert (Bob) K. Glenn, president of Athens State University, invited the AASCU-Penson Center for Professional Development to conduct an evaluation of Dr. Glenn. The initial agreement was for Dr. Patricia Cormier, Executive Director of the AACSU-Penson Center, to conduct the review. But owing to health reasons, Dr. Stephen Reno, a senior associate of the Center, was asked to conduct the on-site meetings and to collaborate with Dr. Cormier in the development of a final report to the Board. Preparation for the on-site visit included conference calls, email correspondence, and review of relevant documents. In addition, those individuals unable to meet in person with Dr. Reno, submitted written statements. Drs Cormier and Reno express appreciation to all parties at the university for their cooperation and hospitality over the course of this evaluation process, especially Ms. Jackie Gooch and Dr. Ronald Ingle.

The conduct of a comprehensive presidential evaluation is akin, in many ways, to an institutional accreditation visit, insofar as the president prepares a professional self-evaluation pursuant to criteria established by the Board of Trustees and calibrated to his or her stated professional goals. The role of the external reviewer is to test the authenticity of the self-evaluation against the criteria by probing details and pursuing pertinent issues. At the same time, however, the process is not merely one of a regulator or auditor coming to ensure compliance, but rather, a colleague engaging in a “thinkalong” with the chief executive and campus constituencies to identify areas of accomplishment, areas
where improvement should be made, and next steps that are mutually salutary. The observations and recommendations that follow are made in that spirit.

Conduct of the On-site Visit

The on-site visit took place from June 24th to June 26th. Over the course of that time, Dr. Reno had meetings with:

The President of the University
The Mayor of the City of Athens
Members of the ASU Board of Trustees
Senior Staff to the President
Deans and Directors
Representatives of the Faculty Senate
Representatives of the ASU Student Body
Representatives of the ASU Foundation
The Mayor of the City of Decatur
The Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority Director
The President of Calhoun Community College
The Superintendent of Athens City Schools

Observations:

Over the course of its 193 year existence, Athens State University has undergone many significant changes. But perhaps one of most profound occurred in June 2012 when, by an act of the Alabama Legislature and concurrence of the governor, the university became an autonomous public institution governed by an independent Board of Trustees. Key to this development – its conceptualization, planning, advocacy, and implementation – was President Glenn. Without question, while he worked effectively with legislators, campus constituencies, community leaders, and others, it was he who played the principal role bringing about that development. In the wake of institutional independence, many tasks were immediately at hand, including making provisions for the operation of the newly-established Board of Trustees,
nominating candidates to serve on the Board, the review of existing governance documents, policies and procedures, and (as necessary) the development of new versions. In addition, all parties, particularly those within the university, were challenged to be sensitive to the cultural implications of this institutional transformation while simultaneously being attentive to those measures that would be necessary to position ASU in the increasingly competitive higher education landscape both regionally and nationally. As an independent institution, governed by its own board, ASU was (and is) compelled to review all aspects of its operations, from the programs offered, the formats in which they are delivered (and at what cost and at what price), the faculty and staff resources needed to fulfill its mission, the facilities, technologies, and services it provided, the partnerships that would complement the institution and enhance enrollment, and the overall service area in which it exercises its franchise. With attention to the immediate needs of the university, and in collaboration with relevant parties, President Glenn took the lead in the following developments:

- Establishment of twelve new academic programs (majors, minors, and options)
- Establishment of twelve new noncredit certificate programs
- Approval and implementation of a Master’s Degree in Logistics and Supply Chain Management
- Implementation of the Adult Degree Program
- Reaccreditation of its education programs by NCATE
- Establishment of the Center for Lifelong Learning
- Admission of the University Testing Center into the Consortium of College Testing Centers
- Development and implementation of the “Strategic Plan – Reaching Toward 2020”
- Development and approval of the Statement on Shared Governance
- Development and approval of a new Faculty Constitution
- Development and approval of a new Staff Constitution
- Development and approval of new guidelines for the Student Government Association
• Establishment of a Board of Visitors for each of the three colleges
• Establishment of the Alabama Center for the Arts in partnership with Calhoun Community College and with initial support from the City of Decatur
• Investments in administrative and academic technology
• Substantial progress on a three-year capital campaign ($3.5M to a $4M goal)
• Initiation of a bill to allow reverse transfer agreements with two-year colleges
• Achievement of a 2014 operating budget 6.5% under budget
• Renovation of major campus buildings and other beautification projects

Without question, President Glenn has brought vision, commitment, and energy to the positioning and provisioning of Athens State University. With a Strategic Plan now to guide the institution’s activities for a third year, the President has proposed to the Board of Trustees a set of six goals for the 2015-2016 academic year. These include:

• Completion of key leadership searches
• Completion of Phase II of the Alabama Center for the Arts
• Preparation for program and institutional accreditation reviews
• Implementation of approved graduate programs and submission of new ones
• Further development of the Center for Lifelong Learning in partnership with regional business and industry
• Preparation for a biennial capital campaign

Findings

The presidential review process included several core performance criteria, specifically, leadership qualities, effectiveness in forming and carrying out the institutional mission, goals, and priorities, communication skills, management abilities, and collegiality and collaboration.
In an institution that has undergone such a profound change over the last few years, at a time when American higher education itself is operating not only in a highly competitive environment and subject to scrutiny and often criticism from many quarters, it is both critical and urgent that presidential leadership include the ability to be a rational authority, stating clear reasons for decisions; the ability to include appropriate stakeholders and have their views and values considered with respect to those decisions; the ability to be both an advocate for those within the president’s purview (to encourage, lead, and empower them), and to represent the institution to external stakeholders and potential partners; and to have sensitivity and alertness to issues that could be disruptive to the operations of the university. It is relative to these leadership qualities that the following observations are made.

1. President Glenn’s expansion of the university’s historical service area, his establishment or reaffirmation of articulation agreements with local and regional institutions, and his commitment to making access to higher education more widely available (and affordable) to prospective students across the age, region, and employment spectrum, are consistent with the ASU Strategic Plan “Reaching Toward 2020.” Moreover, the Strategic Plan is a “living document” that guides planning, is reported on annually, and is updated or revised as necessary. As such it is a stabilizing factor for this institution in transition.

2. President Glenn has demonstrated visionary leadership in the positioning of the university and the establishment of new partnerships. His outreach to external entities and his commitment to the establishment of mutual partnerships not only is an expression of the university’s mission to serve its region, but also positions the university in the perception of the external communities and lays the foundation for additional joint ventures.

3. Leadership and management of an academic institution are complicated and sensitive processes as most campus constituencies genuinely believe they should be directly involved in all decision-making. The sweeping nature of many of the changes made at ASU and the rapid pace at which they occurred have been matters of concern, particularly among faculty.
There continues to be a perception among some in the campus community that the planning process itself is not as consultative, participatory, or transparent as would be desirable in order to “bring the campus along.” Whether such sentiments are widely held, or truly representative of the situation cannot be determined with precision. Nonetheless the perception remains and continues to be a drag on collective progress as a campus community. Timely, frequent, and genuine communication and engagement are the characteristics most clearly required of the President in order to establish a proper environment for future projects to prosper. The hiring of Dr. Ron Ingle as Interim Provost and the clear delegation of academic matters to him has been helpful in this regard.

4. Undergirding the initiatives of the university’s Strategic Plan is the goal of increasing enrollment and concomitant revenue. As the president has noted, “...negative national enrollment trends continuing in higher education” were reflected in ASU’s fall 2014 enrollment. And while the decline was less than the previous year, the concern remains for the enrollment prospects of an institution that occupies such a distinctive niche in the Alabama higher education context.

5. The gradual decline in the effectiveness of the former provost and the manner in which dissatisfaction regarding his performance was registered illustrated a need for both a standard protocol by which such concerns could be dealt with as well as a greater sensitivity on the part of the president to a growing problem in the campus community. By the time the matter had been resolved, credibility and trust had been seriously compromised. Timely and deliberate attention to restoring mutual trust is clearly needed.

6. The challenge of any academic presidency is that of finding the balance between “hands-on” and “hands-around” one’s institution. The president has both internal and external constituencies. Without question, President Glenn is extremely effective working with external groups and organizations. He is widely perceived as a partnership builder and an eloquent advocate and cheerleader for Athens State. At the same time, however, his visibility on campus and his daily, informal interaction with
faculty, staff, and students will need to be more visible and more intentional. So-called “Management-by-walking-around” would be a step welcomed by many.

7. The Board of Trustees is still in the early stages of its operation as an independent governing body for the university. While good will prevails across its membership, it remains a challenge for all trustees and the president to have adequate and timely communication regarding the state of the university such that each can play its proper role. Attendance at and preparation for board meetings should be a shared responsibility of the president and board chair.

Recommendations

1. With new governance charters for all campus constituency groups now in place, it is recommended that these be publicly reaffirmed by President Glenn as the structures by which institutional planning, budgeting, and related operations will take place. These are foundational documents and the implementation of their provisions as such provide a safeguard against potential criticisms of a lack of due process, consultation, or timely communication.

2. It is recommended that President Glenn, in consultation with the leadership of the campus constituency groups, identify steps that can be taken as soon as possible to regenerate mutual trust and effective collaboration. Consultation with the campus committee on morale would be a promising starting point. Meetings with faculty, staff, and Board members in small groups facilitated by and external consultant may be a prudent way to begin to foster transparency and engender mutual respect.

3. To address the student enrollment challenge, it is recommended that President Glenn consider the value of engaging a consulting firm to assist on-campus personnel in the development of an appropriate enrollment management and marketing strategy.

4. It is recommended that President Glenn, in cooperation with the chair of the Board of Trustees, conduct an evaluation of the Board’s effectiveness
as a group and of the trustees as individuals with the goal of strengthening the board’s proper governing role, its oversight and its accountability for implementation of the Strategic Plan, achievement of the president’s annual goals, and overall operations of the university. It may be prudent for the Board to undergo a professional development opportunity to more clearly define roles and responsibilities.

5. The selection of an appropriate Chief Academic Officer as soon as possible will assist the President in working with the faculty to achieve respect and trust and ensure that agreed upon strategies are implemented and evaluated. The appointment of a chief academic officer, together with the appointment of a vice president for advancement could be an opportunity for a staff development experience for the President’s Cabinet as a group to ensure alignment of collective effort with the Strategic Plan and the president’s goals.

These recommendations are offered with admiration and respect for the President and hope that he can implement them to ensure more stability and good will on campus and also strengthen institutional effectiveness.