

Leveraging stakeholder engagement to reconstitute a diverse business advisory council

Received (in revised form): 26th April, 2022



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Abstract

This paper looks at how academic leadership in US business schools and university advancement can work collaboratively to (re)constitute a business advisory council (BAC) comprising a more broadly diverse group of alumni and corporate partners that benefit the school, the students and the philanthropic efforts of the school. Academic leadership receives much-needed 'real world' advice and counsel about curricular and strategic issues; council members have an important and meaningful way to contribute to their alma mater or an academic partner in their community. If this council membership is groomed properly, advancement builds an annual donation stream that can be counted on to offset some of the financial pressures and, perhaps, can begin to source and train future candidates for the Board of Trustees. Students not only benefit from better-informed curricula, they also begin to build important network connections with the organisational community that could benefit them when they enter the internship or post-graduation employment market. In short, taking the time and energy to reconstitute a more diverse BAC could be a win-win for all parties involved.

Keywords

advisory council, advisory board, alumni relations, corporate relations, diversity, equity and inclusion, university advancement

INTRODUCTION

One common way US business schools engage external stakeholders such as alumni and corporate partners is through business advisory councils (BACs), typically coordinated through the Office of the Dean of Business. AACSB International, a principal accreditation body for business schools, reports a 34 per cent increase in member business schools working with a BAC from 350 members in 2013–2014 to approximately 480 schools as of 2017–2018.¹ At the same time, Della Bradshaw, writing for the *Financial Times*, observes that ‘. . . most deans in North America have stayed in the job for five years, compared with four in Europe and Asia. . . . What is more, a quarter of deans only hold the title for three years or less.’² Given the time it takes to source, recruit and train candidates for BACs, these two statistics taken together suggest that implementing and managing BACs in an effective and productive manner would be challenging under the best of circumstances. The risk to business schools experiencing this type of leadership turnover is an idle and ineffective BAC that is left unattended as one Dean leaves and another takes over. Flynn, in discussing her list of general *rules* for effective BAC oversight, points out that, ‘[a] dysfunctional or inactive BAC can hurt your institution. Not only are members on that BAC likely to think poorly of the school and/or its leadership, but they may comment on the dysfunction with other colleagues and business leaders.’³

Through a combination of unusual circumstances, Bentley University, located a little west of downtown Boston, experienced a rapid succession of Deans from 2008 to 2011. With the exit of one Dean, a new Dean was hired, bringing needed international perspective and experience to the university. After one and a half years, he was promoted to Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost, creating the need for a third Dean to be appointed. This succession of three Deans in a very short period of time led to a BAC that had not been fully utilised or directed during the three-year transition period.

The purpose of this paper is to present the process and the strategy that the new Dean and his team developed and implemented over the first three years of his tenure to reconstitute and reinvigorate the BAC. Working closely with University Advancement, Enrolment Management, and the Special Assistant to the President for Diversity, the Dean was able to recast the BAC into a diverse group of external stakeholders, who could effectively and productively contribute to the university’s strategy.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, a brief overview of the literature on advisory boards in general and business advisory councils in particular is discussed. Section 3 outlines in more detail the assessment aspects and specific steps that were followed in reconstituting the Bentley BAC. Section 4 presents the outcomes from the reconstitution effort and concludes the discussion.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCILS

Surprisingly, previous research on how colleges and universities utilise advisory boards and councils is relatively sparse. Of the research that has been done, the works fall into several general categories. First, a number of studies look at the use of advisory boards specifically in terms of their development and implementation within particular academic disciplines, particularly hospitality education,⁴ communications programmes,^{5,6} physical education,⁷ engineering programmes⁸ and entrepreneurial studies/programmes;⁹ studies that examine the use of advisory councils by discipline or division include library education¹⁰ and executive education.¹¹

A second category of studies uses a survey method as the informational basis for their work. One of the older and most often cited studies is by Conroy, LeFever and Withiam, who investigate hospitality management advisory boards and councils and how they operate.¹² They sent out 146 surveys to four-year programmes. Forty-two programmes out of 50 respondents (84 per cent) did, in fact, have advisory mechanisms. These boards averaged 27 members, a little larger than the ideal recommended size of 15–20 members cited by the authors. Membership of these boards were largely alumni and professionals from the hospitality fields. The authors suggested that faculty membership could also be of some value, but faculty membership should not make up a very large percentage. The boards and councils met an average of twice per year and focused their attention on providing advice to academic leadership on programme and curricular issues, student job placements and internships and fundraising activities.

Two other survey articles look at the prevalence and characteristics of advisory councils among AACSB business school members. A comparison of their results appears below in Table 1.

Both studies had more than reasonable response rates, leading to acceptable sample sizes. Kaupins and Coco, the earlier study, had a sample of 114 members schools (28.5 per cent response rate) compared to Ellington et al. who had a sample of 197 schools with a response rate of 47.7 per cent. The number of schools reported as having BACs was 47.6 per cent and 98.5 per cent, respectively, in the two studies, suggesting that more schools developed BACs between the 2002 study and that of 2010. Comparing the two studies also suggests that while the number of BACs grew over the time between the two studies, their sizes may, in fact, have been shrinking. In the 2002 article, 72.9 per cent of the schools oversaw councils with ten or more members and 50 per cent had councils with 20 or more members. By the 2010 article, some 41 per cent had ten or fewer members and a little more than 88 per cent had 20 or fewer members, suggesting that council size on average was getting smaller.

Both studies addressed membership composition. Industry professionals and executives made up over 90 per cent of board membership, and by 2010 just under 45 per cent included non-alumni professionals to round out and add to needed expertise not found in their alumni bases. Government, non-profit, faculty and students all had some representation on some councils and boards by this time as well. In terms of gender, men (women) tended to make up nearly 80 per cent (20 per cent) in the later study. Much like the hospitality management survey, length of

TABLE 1: Summary of results from articles surveying AACSB business school members

Authors	Kaupins & Coco¹	Ellington, Elbert & Moser²
Publication date	2002	2010
Sample size (response rate)	114 (28.5%)	197 (47.7%)
Sample schools with BACs	47.6%	98.5%
Size of BAC		
Mean (median)	34.4 members (27 members)	n.a.
Ranges of membership		
Less than 10 members	2.1%	Less than 10 members 41.2%
10–19 members	22.9%	10–15 members 29.4%
20–29 members	28.6%	16–20 members 17.6%
30–39 members	21.4%	21 plus members 11.1%
Composition		
Male (Female)	n.a. (n.a.)	81.5% (19.5%)
Industry professionals	92.3%	90.0%
Government	56.4%	n.a.
Nonprofit organizations	61.5%	n.a.
Non-alumni members	n.a.	44.6%
Faculty	n.a.	18.0%
Student	n.a.	13.0%
Length of term		
Mean (median)	n.a.	n.a. (3 years)
2 years	18.8%	n.a.
3 years	56.3%	69.9%
Renewable?	n.a.	98.7%
Number of meetings per year		
Mean (median)	n.a.	2.48 times (2 times)
2 years	58.8%	n.a.
3 years	17.6%	n.a.

Source: ¹Information is taken from text and Table 1 in Kaupins, G. and Coco, M. (2002) 'Administrator perceptions of business school advisory boards', *Education*, Vol. 123, 351–357.

²Information is taken from text and Tables 1–4 in Ellington, D., Elbert, D. and Moser, S. (2010) 'Advisory councils for business colleges: Composition and Utilization', *American Journal of Business Education*, Vol. 3, 1–8.

term in both studies was between two and three years. By the time of the 2010 study, 98 per cent of the schools allowed for renewable terms of service. Both studies suggest that the BACs in their sample meet between two and three times per year and confirm earlier results that BACs tend to focus on advising academic leadership on programme/curricular issues, student employment (eg post-graduate job placements and internships), and fundraising activities.

Several more recent studies comprise a third research category using a case study approach and analysing efforts at particular colleges or universities around leveraging stakeholder engagement and the use of advisory boards and councils. Grant, Jung and Chicoine write about

joint efforts between alumni relations and advancement divisions at Simon Fraser University to increase alumni engagement in the San Francisco Bay area for the strategic benefit of their graduates in the area, current students and institution as a whole.¹³ Another study examines the full range of advisory structures at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia, including the Board of Trustees, a Board of Visitors that supports the School of Business Administration, and advisory committees for the departments of Information Technology & Management and Health Information Management.¹⁴ Finally, Felsen and Nastanski discuss how Saint Leo University in Florida formed an advisory council in the School of Business to better support their strategic goal of

building and developing more purposeful engagement from the school's various stakeholders.¹⁵ These authors cite improved student experiences and learning and increases in innovative thinking around new and existing programmes as the primary benefits of adding the council. While each of these papers talks about implementing new stakeholder engagement strategies and creating boards and councils for the first time, the current paper's use of the case study examines the reconstituting of an idle and ineffective council due to unusual and rapid leadership changes at Bentley University in Massachusetts.

BENTLEY UNIVERSITY RECONSTITUTES ITS BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL

History of the school

Bentley University is an independent, non-sectarian business university located west of Boston in Waltham, Massachusetts. At the time of this writing, College Factual lists Bentley's total enrolments as 5,314 students, including 4,177 undergraduate and 563 graduate students (studying in specialised Masters, MBA and Doctoral programmes).¹⁶ Gender composition for undergraduates includes 58.8 per cent males and 41.2 per cent females, while graduate breakdown is almost the exact opposite with 56.8 per cent females and 43.2 per cent males.

The university continues to grow increasingly diverse: 25% of undergraduate students and 21% of graduate students identify as ALANA (African American, Latino-American, Asian-American, Native American, and multicultural, not including international students). International students account for 15% of undergraduates and 26% of graduate students.¹⁷

The faculty complement comprises 265 full-time faculty members (eg includes tenured, tenure-track and not-tenured lecturers) and 160 part-time adjunct faculty members. Of the full-time faculty, 162 teach in business disciplines while 105 faculty teach in the arts and science fields.¹⁸

Founded as the Bentley School of Accounting and Finance in 1917 by Harry C. Bentley, a Boston University accounting professor, the school began as a proprietary school. Located in the Back Bay area of downtown Boston, the school provided preparatory training for the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) examination in the evenings. In 1948, it was incorporated as a non-profit institution, and, in 1961, the school charter was amended to change the name to Bentley College of Accounting and Finance with authority to grant both Associate and Bachelor of Science degrees in accounting.

In 1971, the school expanded its degree offerings to include Bachelor of Science (BS) and Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees, and the institution changed its name to Bentley College. Bentley received authority to grant Master's degrees in the business disciplines in 1973. During this time, the school relocated to its current site in Waltham, a suburb of Boston, and, for the first time in its history, became a full-time, residential campus.

Over the next several decades, Bentley continued to build its brand as a regional and national business school. In 2005, Bentley was granted authority from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to grant the PhD in accountancy and the PhD in business (both launched in 2006), leading to the successful petition to change its legal status to Bentley University in 2008.

Over its more than 100-year history, Bentley has experienced three very

distinct personalities. For the longest part of its life, the school had a tradition in accounting and finance education. In the late 1990s and into the first decade of the 2000s, the school built a reputation as the school for the information age. More recently, it has worked to expand its regional and national footprint abroad as an international business university, building an array international academic and organisational partnerships and connections. This effort culminated in the addition of EQUIS accreditation to its longstanding AACSB International accreditation in both Business and Accounting. At the time, Bentley was one of three US schools to hold EQUIS accreditation.

During this time, the quick succession in the Dean of Business Office began. The outgoing Dean had a strong IT background. While that remained an important focus for the school, the resource and energy commitment was shifting more rapidly toward an international focus and strategy. A Dean with strong connections to the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) and the EQUIS accreditation process was recruited from a European school. However, within a year and a half, he was promoted to Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, creating the need for a third Dean in just under two years. The role was assumed by an internal candidate who had a good working relationship with both the new Provost and the President.

Motivations for changing the council

During this transition period, the existing BAC was largely idle. The second Dean was not in the position to both become accustomed to the role and to

reengage with the council before moving into the Provost role. The effort to reconstitute and reengage the BAC fell to the third Dean. One of the early moves made by the new Dean was to create a position for Director of External Relations for Academic Affairs. The person who assumed that role had served in multiple roles during his tenure at Bentley that suited him for the newly created position. He had served as an Assistant Dean for the Graduate School of Business, launched the first version of the Graduate Career Services Office, and more recently worked as a gift officer in University Advancement. When the Dean served as the Chair of the Finance Department, the two had worked together to create three advisory boards to support the Finance Department. They collaborated to create an Investment Banking & Management Board based in New York City, as well as boards in Investment & Private Wealth Management and Venture Capital & Private Equity, both based in Boston. Additionally, the two had previously collaborated on an initiative that helped create advisory boards comprising alumni and professionals to provide advice to entrepreneurial stakeholders in the Bentley community.¹⁹ This past collaboration and the direct connection to University Advancement made the pairing ideal for the reconstitution effort.

At the beginning of the effort, the two reached out to the Vice Presidents for University Advancement and Enrolment Management to better ensure that all three divisions were actively engaged and contributing to the revitalisation of the BAC. They also worked closely with the Special Assistant to the President, whose domain included diversity, equity and inclusion. Next, the Dean reached out to the most recent BAC Chair, a senior partner at KPMG, who was invited to continue

servicing in that capacity. Both the Dean and the Director knew him well, and he had served as a member of the recruiting committee that ultimately selected the Dean. All believed that his input would be valuable throughout the planning phase and his involvement would be critical during the relaunch. This completed the team that would develop and collaborate on the plan for the transition.

Developing the plan for change

The Dean, Director, the BAC Chair, the Special Assistant to the President, the two Vice Presidents, as well as their designees when appropriate, developed a strategy and plan for effectively remaking the BAC that included steps similar to those needed to create a council for the first time.

Connect to the university mission

The BAC needed to operate in a manner that supported the university's mission and core values, which centred on educating ethical and socially responsible organisational leaders who have an appreciation for diverse perspectives and voices, global and multicultural understanding, and creative problem-solving skills. To accomplish this, the Dean and the team believed that the university had to be committed to creating a completely diverse community. 'Completely diverse' meant at all levels of the university, from top to bottom. The reorganisation offered an opportunity to make the BAC one of the most, if not *the* most, diverse group on campus. A diverse council brings diverse perspectives to the table. Posting on PreparedU, a Bentley online newsletter, the Dean noted,

[T]heir role is critical. They are the ones advising and informing strategic and curricular details and opportuni-

ties regarding our business programme agenda. More importantly, they are the ones who offer brutal honesty. It is their unfiltered points of view . . . that help shape our curricula for the better, make programmes more inclusive and better-rounded, and suggest strategic goals that we may have overlooked.²⁰

These diverse perspectives inform and influence the strategic conversations, first among the council membership and later among the academic leadership. While this goal of bringing diversity to the BAC was certainly a worthwhile and beneficial effort, it turned out to be neither quick nor easy to accomplish. The total transformation took about two years to develop, implement and complete. It began with taking an inventory of the educational and experiential backgrounds of the most recent membership.

Assess the appropriate desired expertise and backgrounds of membership

Given the history of the school, the existing idle membership was largely made up of members from the accounting and information technology fields and mostly undergraduate alumni. Also, given the historical trends in business school attendance, the membership mainly comprised white males. This spoke to several important criteria in this assessment. The first step involved determining the disciplines that should be included given the array of degree programmes and areas of study. The sense was that a broader coverage of these areas was needed, including representation across the variety of undergraduate and graduate degree programmes. Secondly, as described above, considerable thought went into deciding to recreate this BAC as the most diverse group at the university. This entailed thinking more deeply

about finding an appropriate mix according to race, gender and age. The decision was also made to increase the non-alumni opportunities for membership when any of the above-mentioned characteristics needed better representation.

The third step entailed an analysis of the backgrounds of the existing members. Information on their educational and professional experience was obtained from University Advancement, which also provided details on each member's giving history to the school. The BAC Chair provided insight into which members had been valuable contributors in the past and who had not. Once this had been collected and analysed, the Dean had a better sense of who might be valuable to keep on the council and who should probably be asked to step down. In parallel, the team began creating a 'wish list' of possible new candidates for membership consideration.

Create a charter that defines expectations and responsibilities

Prior to contacting the existing and potential members, the team spent time formulating a charter that outlined operating policies and the responsibilities and expectations for members (a copy of that charter can be found in Appendix I). Specifically, the charter described the purpose of the BAC and how it would operate. It laid out giving expectations with the understanding that the Dean sought 100% participation for giving. Specific amounts were stipulated for alumni while non-alumni were asked to make a significant gift within their means and considering their other giving obligations. According to the Executive Director for External Relations,

[t]he goal of 100% participation sends an important message to the community

about the important collaboration and connection between Academic Affairs and University Advancement. Members will always have alternative pressures on their philanthropic endeavors that might make achieving that goal difficult and challenging. However, having that target as an aspirational goal and continuing to press towards it is important.²¹

In the end, the membership managed to achieved giving levels of 75–80 per cent over the ensuing three-year period.

Finally, members would be invited to serve for a three-year term, which was renewable if mutually agreed and based upon the members' active engagement in BAC efforts during the previous term. Roles were outlined for both a Chair and Vice Chair of the council. A more general description of the members roles was also presented.

Extend invitations to be a member of the new BAC

The most important and the most time-consuming step of all was making personal connections with candidates for membership. Appointments were made with the Director and the Dean in person where possible. At these meetings, members were thanked for their previous service, were informed of the plans for the reconstitution of the BAC and asked whether they wanted to continue to participate. Several key reappointments and one new appointment were deemed significantly important for the relaunch and took place early in the invitation process with the assistance of the BAC Chair.

- One key member was the CFO for a Boston-based insurance company. He had been active in past Finance Department initiatives and his firm was an active recruiter of Bentley students.

- The second member invited to remain was the Executive Director for the Massachusetts High Technology Council. His continued membership would ensure continuity in an important institutional relationship between his organisation and the school.
- The first new invitation went out to an alumna working in the advancement function at another local university. She had recently completed her service on the Bentley University Board of Trustees and had a strong willingness to continue supporting the school. She was asked to join as the Vice Chair with the understanding that she would be the heir-apparent when the current Chair retired, something he expected to happen in the next two to three years.

An example of the invitations to potential new members is shown in Appendix II.

With these key (re)appointments accomplished, the team met with all remaining current members. These meetings resulted in the Dean retaining almost all of the members that he wanted. Some agreed to new three-year terms, while others offered to stay for one or two years to help make sure the relaunch was successful and to stagger the terms of members so that all terms did not end in the same academic year. In fact, the intention was to turn over or renew about one-third of the BAC membership each year.

To complete the solicitation and recruiting phase, the Dean and the team shifted their focus to meeting with potential new members. This process proceeded in a similar manner. When possible, candidates met personally with the Dean and the Director. The pool came from the collective work of the Dean and Director, relying on their contacts from previous advisory boards and alumni/professional acquaintances. Other candidates were

identified and proposed the VP for Advancement. A pool of companies with a long and strong track record of recruiting Bentley graduates and interns was also developed by the team in conjunction with the Career Services Centre. This built confidence that the breadth of corporate, discipline and programme representation in future membership would be consistent with, or exceed, what had been established as a goal.

OUTCOMES

Advisory council outcomes

In the end, the recruiting efforts resulted in a new BAC comprising 32 members. The envisaged size of the BAC had been a number in this range, believing that it would better ensure the possibility that at least 20–25 members could make each of the two meetings scheduled for the academic year. Summary statistics and characteristics about the reconstituted BAC are shown in Table 2.

In terms of gender, men and women were equally represented on the new BAC with 16 members each. Alumni comprised just under 59 per cent at 19 members. Non-alumni made up the remaining 13 members (41 per cent). A breakdown of the alumni members by programme accomplished the goal of adding graduate programme voices to the council. Twelve of the 19 alumni held bachelor's degrees, 11 held Master's degrees and four members were classified as Double Falcons, holding both a bachelor's and a Master's from the school. In all, the 19 alumni members held 23 degrees. Alumna members accounted for 33 per cent of the undergraduate degrees, 46 per cent of the Masters and 25 per cent of the dual degree holders.

Racial and ethnic diversity of the BAC membership was improved as well. Nearly

TABLE 2: Summary statistics of reconstituted BAC membership

<i>Council characteristic</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Full membership	32	16	16
Alumni	19	8	11
Non-alumni	13	8	5
Alumni membership			
Undergraduate	12	4	8
Graduate	11	5	6
Double Falcons ¹	4	1	3
Racial/ethnic diversity			
African-American	7	4	3
Asian-American	4	3	1
Latinx-American	4	2	2
White	17	7	10
International²	5	2	3

¹Double Falcons hold both an undergraduate and graduate degree from the school.

²International members included members who were born outside of the US, were naturalised, hold dual citizenships (eg passports) or some combination of the three.

47 per cent of the final membership (15 members) came from underrepresented groups, including 22 per cent African-American, 13 per cent Asian-American and 13 per cent Latinx-American. Nine of the 15 were women of colour. Additionally, five members had an international orientation, which included one or more of the following: having been born abroad, holding a foreign passport, or holding dual citizenship in the USA and another country.

Corporate and organisational representation goals were also successfully accomplished. The firms and their industry sectors are shown in Table 3. Major firms in the accounting and financial services space were well represented by KPMG, BNY Mellon, Fidelity Investments, Loomis Sayles, Morgan Stanley and State Street Global Advisors. In addition to these larger players, several other important financial services categories were represented, including a regional bank (Eastern Bank), a major credit card

company (Diners Club International), a venture capital firm (Fairhaven Capital). The technology space included companies such as Black Duck Software (open-source software management), Pegasystems and PTC (computer software) and VCE, a division of EMC (cloud platforms). The company list also included Arbor Pharmaceuticals, Exxon MOBIL, Globalization Partners, H.P. Hood and Relevant 24, an international marketing services company.

While this company list is impressive, the titles and positions held by the BAC members was equally impressive. These titles are listed according to industry sectors in Table 4.

The list contained founding and managing partners of accounting, financial and professional service firms. C-suite positions are also well represented. Members served as business unit, divisional or corporate chief executive officers. Additionally, members filled roles as chief officers for finance; investment; diversity, equity and inclusion; and operations. Many held the position of president, either at the corporate or divisional level. A variety of vice president levels were held by members as well, including senior and executive. Other domain areas of leadership included medical sciences, marketing, risk analytics technology and university advancement.

Academic Affairs strategic outcomes

While the development, implementation and accomplishment of strategic initiatives in any college or university requires input and participation from all of the organisation's relevant stakeholders, the Dean and his leadership team were able to accomplish several crucial and high priority initiatives during their seven-year

TABLE 3: Summary of organisational representation of BAC membership

<i>Company/Organisation</i>	<i>Industry sector</i>
Corporate	
Arbor Pharmaceuticals	Biopharma
Black Duck Software	Open-source software management
BNY Mellon	Investment banking
Diners Club International	Financial services
Eastern Bank	Commercial banking
Exxon MOBIL	Energy services
Fairhaven Capital Partners	Venture capital
Fidelity Investments	Financial services
Globalization Partners	Global human resources services
H.P. Hood	Dairy manufacturer/distributor
KPMG	Accounting/consulting
Loomis Sayles	Investment management
Morgan Stanley	Financial services
Pegasystems	Computer software
PTC	Computer software
Relevant 24	Marketing services
State Street Global Advisors	Financial services
VCE	Cloud platforms
Professional services	
Athena Legal Strategies Group	Legal services
Cutwater Capital	Financial consulting for startups
Innov Group	Management consulting
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP	Legal services
Non-profit/non-Government	
Mass High Tech Council	Technology
Northeastern University	Higher education

tenure with valuable input, advice and counsel from the newly reconstituted BAC. All of these accomplishments were conceived in the Office of the Provost, which comprises the Provost, and the Deans of Business and Arts & Sciences, respectively. Planning and implementation was overseen by the two Deans, the Executive Director for External Relations in Academic Affairs and the Associate Deans. Each initiative was presented to the BAC as a concept for input, and, in most cases, at subsequent meetings for continued update, input and discussion. While Deans rarely look to BACs for voting or approval of projects, their support of agenda initiatives can become important in moving these efforts through faculty and administrative governance. A brief summary of these strategic initiatives follows.

Recruitment, retention and development of faculty

At the time the Dean assumed his position, Bentley, like many colleges and universities, had an aging full-time faculty with nearly 50 per cent being 60 years old or older. To address this issue, the Office of the Provost developed, formalised and implemented a structured phased retirement programme that provided full-time professorial faculty with the option of a one, two or three-year phase-out with the last half or full year being a terminal sabbatical. Lecturers were eligible for six-month or one-year phase-outs. The principal benefit of this programme was that it facilitated better forecasting of the need to replace retiring faculty and the optimum timing for this, allowing the Deans and the provost to begin planning their recruitment

TABLE 4: Summary of positions/titles held by BAC membership

<i>Industry sector</i>	<i>Positions/titles</i>
Corporate	
Accounting/consulting	Managing Partner
Biopharma	Medical Science Liaison
Computer software	Chief Financial Officer
	Executive Vice President
	Senior Manager, Data & Technology
Dairy manufacturer/distributor	Vice President, Finance
Energy Services	Senior Marketing Executive
Human Resources Services	Chief Operating Officer
Financial services	Chief Diversity Officer
	Partner & Chief Financial Officer
	Chief Executive Officer, Wealth Management
	Chief Investment Officer
	Director of Risk
	Head, Risk Analytics
	President
	Senior Vice President
	Vice President
Marketing Services	President
Professional services	
Legal services	Founding Partner & CEO
	Director of D, E & I
Financial consulting for startups	Partner
Management consulting	President & CEO
Non-Profit/non-Government	
Technology	President
Higher education	Director of Major Gifts

schedule in some fashion over a three-year platform.

A very measurable outcome of this phase-out programme and the recruiting efforts it supported was the ability to successfully recruit over 106 full-time faculty out of a faculty contingent of 290 over the seven-year period. Of these new recruits, 46.2 per cent were women, which was 14 per cent higher than the number of women who had retired or left for other reasons. Just over 25 per cent of those recruits were faculty of colour over the seven years, reaching 31.7 per cent in the last two years. Finally, the average age of incoming faculty was 16 years younger than all departing faculty during that period and 27 years younger than those who retired, allowing for significant improvement in the aging faculty problem.

A second issue that was presented and discussed with the BAC addressed ways in which the academic leadership team could strengthen the incentives available to encourage faculty to pursue promotion and/or tenure (P&T) as part of an *intentional* retention strategy. BAC members offered examples of mechanisms their organisations used to retain key employees, particularly in areas of professional development and economic incentives. Following these conversations, the Office of the Provost instituted stipends to support research efforts, pursue professional development opportunities and for successfully achieving promotion to the next rank. The results during the last five years included 50 per cent of the P&T decisions at the associate professor level were women, 54.2 per cent of the promotions to full professor were women, and 21.5

per cent of the tenure promotions were faculty candidates of colour.

Last, and perhaps most significantly, conversations with, and input from, the BAC facilitated the pursuit and the achievement in the fifth year of pay equality for male and female full-time faculty. This was true with respect to average base salaries across all professorial (assistant, associate and full) and lecturer (lecturer and senior lecturer) ranks.

Academic programme innovation

The Dean engaged the BAC in a variety of conversations about academic programme innovation. Specific input regarding the learning objectives and outcomes of each programme innovation was solicited from members of the BAC. They were also asked about the employability of students who might graduate from these programmes (eg internships and post-graduate employment).

Much of the Dean's tenure entailed extensive efforts to reposition and rebrand the McCallum Graduate School of Business. At the forefront of this repositioning effort was changing the existing full-time MBA programme into two new, full-time, cohort-based MBA programmes. The first was the flagship Bentley MBA for seasoned leaders with 5–10 years of experience and the second was an Emerging Leaders MBA for recent bachelor graduates. At the same time, efforts were put forth to reposition a lagging, part-time Professional MBA for students with 3–5 years of organisational experience. This segregation of MBA students across the experiential spectrum benefited tremendously from the BAC discussions. Having graduate programme alumni available to provide their insights to the historical programmes, as well as an understanding of leadership's current

strategic direction, enriched the quality of the final product and confirmed what were deemed as the benefits of restructuring the programme to appeal to different age and experience levels.

Simultaneously, a review of the Masters' of Science portfolio was conducted. The review included seven existing degree programmes in accountancy, finance, human factors/usability, IT, tax, financial planning, and marketing analytics and the addition of a new programme in business analytics launched in the autumn of 2013.

At the undergraduate level, a new degree completion programme was developed to be delivered asynchronously for an older population of adults who were looking to finish previous studies to better facilitate their return to work or career progression. Target markets included women returning to the workforce, former military personnel phasing back into civilian roles and working professionals looking to overcome workplace barriers through furthering or completing their education.

All of these initiatives and programmes certainly could have been developed and launched without the input from the reconstituted BAC. However, having access to executive level professionals with a knowledge of Bentley, the school's strategic direction and the ability to meet the current needs and desires of the marketplace facilitated both the speed and the quality of these programme innovations.

Other important outcomes

The reconstitution of the BAC led to other significant changes around the university. Shortly after the completion of the work involving the BAC, the Executive Director for External Relations began working closely with the Dean of

Arts & Sciences to restructure the Arts & Sciences Advisory Council (A&SAC). This work took a similar amount of time and resulted in similar improvement to the demographics of the membership.

The potential grooming of future Trustees has been mentioned as a benefit to both alumni and the institution. In the four years since the Dean stepped down, four members of the BAC and three members of the A&SAC have graduated to the Bentley Board of Trustees. Thus, the two councils have contributed 31.8 per cent of the total current Board of 22 members. Additionally, three of the seven advisory council 'graduates' are women and two are African-American, adding significantly to the diversity of the university's top advisory committee.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The reorganisation undertaking offered an opportunity to make the BAC one of the most, if not *the* most, diverse group on campus in all manifestations of the diversity objectives established by the Dean and his team. This included gender, race and ethnicity, age, programmes and disciplines of study, and corporate outreach and representation. This claim to be the 'most diverse' group is a difficult one to substantiate. The Special Assistant to the President responsible for diversity issues at Bentley, who served in this capacity under five of the university's presidents, recently said,

At the time the [BAC] efforts were concluded, the group did in fact represent the most diverse standing committee on the Bentley campus in my experience at Bentley and served as a role model of other working groups and committees.²²

While most BACs are typically secondary in importance to the Board of Trustees, their role to the school or college they serve and represent can be vital. They advise and inform the Dean's leadership team about strategic and curricular issues regarding the business programme agenda. If the composition of the BAC is well thought out, members will often offer the aforementioned brutal honesty and unfiltered points of view. While this input can be difficult to hear, it could potentially help reshape the school's curricula and community for the better.

Academic leadership receives much needed 'real world' advice and counsel about curricular and strategic issues. These diverse perspectives inform and influence the strategic conversations, not just among the council membership but more broadly among the university's academic leadership and community. If the institution's strategy is informed and influenced by these perspectives, it could facilitate the hiring of a more diverse faculty, which leads to more diverse role models at the front of the classroom and may also increase the diversity of the future student population. Increasingly, companies that recruit business graduates are looking for more diversity in the candidates they interview and ultimately offer to appoint.

Additionally, council members obtain an important and meaningful way to contribute to their *alma mater* or an academic partner in their community that enhances their connections to an important pool of future employees. If this council membership is groomed properly, Advancement builds an annual donation stream that can be counted on to offset some of the financial pressures, and, perhaps, can begin to source and train future candidates for the Board of Trustees, as seen in this Bentley example. Students not only benefit from better informed *curricula*, they also begin to

build important network connections with the organisational community that could benefit them when they enter the internship or post-graduation employment market. In short, taking the time and energy to reconstitute a more diverse BAC could be a win-win for all of the university's stakeholders and nourishes an increasingly diverse university environment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Roy Wiggins acknowledges financial support from a Bentley University summer research grant. The authors would like to thank the editor and an anonymous reviewer for their helpful and insightful comments and assume responsibility for any errors.

APPENDIX I. BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL (BAC) CHARTER, BENTLEY UNIVERSITY & THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Description

Purpose

The Business Advisory Council (BAC) provides advice, counsel and assistance to the leadership of the Bentley University Business School and The Elkin B. McCallum Graduate School of Business

Function

The Council will be asked to provide advice that will assist the Dean in evaluating various alternatives to key issues that face Bentley University. He will seek information from members of the council during public meetings and in private conversations. There will be an expectation that the Dean will receive counsel on issues that relate to transitioning

academic theory into cogent business practices that can be used by our alumni and business partners.

At meetings of the Business Advisory Council, attention will be focused on university progress and notable achievements, new initiatives and how they relate to business, challenges facing the academic and business community, and other areas of mutual concern. These practices will take the form of mock interviews, presentations as part of a panel, attending big speaker events, advising on entrepreneurial activity such as Venture Capital & Private Equity issues, discussing domestic and global strategies for the students, faculty, and university.

There will be a goal that involves every board member making a gift to Bentley University. Alumni of Bentley will be requested to share a gift of at least US\$2,500 per year to the Bentley Fund. Friends of Bentley that participate on the council will be requested to make a gift that is significant for them but will be exempt from any stated amount. The goal is to achieve a 100% participation rate for giving.

Operation

An agenda, along with background information outlining the key issues, will be circulated in advance of all meetings. Members are expected to take an active role in Council deliberations, ultimately recommending actions that contribute to the quality of university offerings and strengthen its overall reputation.

- The Business Advisory Council will operate on a fiscal year from July 1 through June 30.
- The Business Advisory Council will meet twice a year, fall semester and spring semester.

- The Officers of the Council shall be a chair and a vice-chair appointed by the Dean. Heads of *ad hoc* committees will also be appointed.
- *Ad-hoc* committees will be established, as necessary, to address special needs and concerns as they arise.
- All travel expenses incurred to attend meetings will be the responsibility of the individual members.
- In order to ensure the viability of the body, members are expected to attend both Council meetings each year. Conference call capability will be available for those who have informed the Council of scheduling conflicts.

Work

Members are invited to serve for three-year terms with an option for a second three year renewal. Terms officially begin July 1st following the year in which the invitation was extended by the Dean and formally accepted by the new board member.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Council serve staggered three-year terms commencing on July 1st following the year selected. The Chair is asked to assist with the following responsibilities:

- Preside at meetings of the Board and Executive Committee.
- Help with development of the agenda.
- Assist with recruitment of new members.
- Participate in annual solicitation of Board members.
- Sign correspondence as needed.
- Take part in evaluation of Board members as terms expire.

The Vice Chair will assume the same responsibilities if the Chair is unable to execute the tasks listed above.

APPENDIX II. LETTER OF INVITATION TO JOIN THE BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL (BAC)

[Date]

Dear [Potential BAC member]:

Bentley University and the Graduate School of Business has undertaken a number of new initiatives targeted at establishing important relationships with students, faculty, alumni, and the business community. As part of this forward movement, I am reconstituting the Business Advisory Council (BAC), and I am pleased you have considered membership.

The Bentley University Business Advisory Council assists the University in a number of important and vital areas. Informally, I may call on members with specific questions or when I am seeking advice on a particular topic. This group of prominent business leaders will meet twice this year (March and November 20xx) and at least once a year thereafter to offer advice and counsel to the Dean and faculty by:

- Reviewing and providing input on the Bentley University and the Graduate School strategic plan
- Providing information and recommendations concerning programmes and activities
- Becoming an advocate and ambassador for the University
- Assisting in the fundraising efforts of the University
- Becoming advocates for student internships and job placements

As a respected and accomplished leader in the business community, your involvement, guidance, advocacy and support are critical to our success: further, your

participation serves as an indication of your confidence in the mission, students, and faculty of the University.

Enclosed are copies of the Dean's Business Advisory Council charter, an agenda, and a member list. Please review the charter and the membership list and if you have any questions please contact John Sims at [phone number] or [email]. Information on upcoming meetings will be given to you following the completion of council formation.

If you require additional information on the Dean's Business Advisory Council, please let me know. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Roy (Chip) Wiggins, III, PhD

Dean of Business

BENTLEY UNIVERSITY

1234 School Street

School Town, State Zip Code

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