

## Why NIRSA Needs Governance Change

### Information accompanying the events and meetings regarding governance review and discussion in conjunction with the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference and Exposition

There can be little doubt that the pace of the modern labor force and the demands for action and decisions have quickened over the past 10 years. The advent of technology, globalization of information, and a heightened expectation of rapid response to consumer demands have required all business sectors -- profit and not-for profit -- re-think management and leadership to meet the changing landscape and its demands.

These market forces that have affected our institutions have similarly changed the environment in which NIRSA operates. The utilization of technology and high reliance on transparent and immediate information sharing has created a market force unseen at any point in our previous and illustrious history. The tipping point for change is upon us. Our profession has redefined and increased the importance of:

- Specialization of a wide array of skill-sets in tandem with demands in a changing higher education market
- An insistence on accountability and continued justification of existence through outcomes-driven assessment
- A nationwide attention to the needs for health and well being to sustain a productive and vibrant institutional environment
- A call for an on-going dialog of engagement and contribution to this state of connectivity
- An expectation to act as a major conduit and facilitator of diversity within the campus community

To meet the ever-changing landscape of these events, NIRSA's governance as a member-driven association must adapt and change in congress with such market forces.

NIRSA has undergone significant changes since the first meeting was held in 1950. While our history suggests that our first 50 years were focused on gaining skills and developing recognition of value within our institutional settings, our recent focus has shifted to partnering with, and providing leadership within, higher education. These changing priorities have led to substantial changes in the functions of the board, an increase in the amount of work required, and changes in the methods for conducting business, yet NIRSA's governance -- specifically the alignment and composition of the Board - has remained relatively unchanged for over 30 years.

Given the changing market forces and the increasing sophistication and complexity of NIRSA's work, it is evident that we need a board that is positioned to be proactive. Best practices, gleaned from reviews of many similar higher education-based national associations, also indicate that a systematic review and change within governance and leadership composition is essential to meeting the needs of an ever-changing world. Today's NIRSA must respond to market forces through an internal organization that prioritizes:

- a knowledge-based board
- a reasonable workload that is sustainable for board members
- a need to be *strategically focused* on leadership, with renewed focus on utilizing the NIRSA National Staff for management
- a need for the NIRSA board to focus on advancing NIRSA as an association, with additional mechanisms created to assist NIRSA in advancing our profession
- an ability to be nimble, efficient, effective, relevant, and contemporary

As we believe the market forces define and shape our profession, we also feel they define our association. It is clear that our current governance structure is inadequate in addressing and meeting the issues elaborated above, thus we call for change in our governance structure. The NIRSA Board must provide the leadership and direction of the association to ensure that the future of our profession can be fully realized.