

Governing boards have a long tradition and prominent role in USA higher education. The diversity of institutional types, and thus governing boards, represents a multifaceted tapestry of functions, roles and responsibilities. This paper will attempt to define the parameters of public higher education governing boards in the USA and offer critical insights into their degree of effectiveness. It is the author's position that both positive and negative lessons can be learned through an examination of these public governing boards in the USA. The recent emergence of university boards in Europe is examined and their characteristics are compared against the characteristics of public and private boards in the USA.