Skowhegan Trustee Roles & Responsibilities

"As a person who has trouble drawing a straight line with a ruler, to get to know a compelling, diverse, unusually kind cadre of artists has been life-changing for me."

Founded in 1946 by artists, for artists, Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture is recognized as one of the foremost residential artistic experiences for emerging visual artists. Located on a 350-acre campus in Maine, the nine-week program provides 65 participants and 11 faculty artists with a collaborative and rigorous environment that is shaped by risk-taking, mentorship, and peer-to-peer exchange. Skowhegan’s admissions process ensures that we accept diverse, promising, and visionary artists, regardless of their financial circumstances or artistic backgrounds. Our impact is viewed as important and global. To find out more about the program, click here.

Governance

Skowhegan’s dual governance structure is a fundamental aspect of the organization. The Board of Trustees has legal and fiscal responsibility for Skowhegan’s programs, operations, and finances. The Board of Governors is a group of artists of high professional standing, and they oversee the educational program, including the selection of faculty and participants. Governors have attended Skowhegan as a participant or faculty artist. The Boards of Trustees and Governors work together to provide oversight, ensuring that Skowhegan fulfills its mission and remains a powerful voice in the emerging and contemporary art community.

Both Trustees and Governors participate in Board Committees, and all actively help build community around Skowhegan. These two arms of our leadership meet together twice a year, reviewing plans and programs, and most importantly, ensuring that Skowhegan is consistent with our ethic of a program run by artists for artists.

"[Skowhegan differs from other boards because of its] Strong sense of community and support of one another. Two separate boards that focus on their unique talents making the organization stronger."

Your Role

In connection with their oversight role, a Trustee has three primary areas of responsibility:

Trustees are responsible for understanding Skowhegan’s mission, monitoring its outcome, and implementing policies to assure the mission is achieved. Our Trustees’ passion and involvement are vital to the success of our program, and your participation will depend on your skill set and network, as there are various ways you can help.

Trustees attend meetings and provide valuable counsel in areas of personal and professional expertise. Trustees serve in leadership positions and undertake specialty assignments willingly and enthusiastically. They bring good will to the Board’s deliberations.

Trustees promote Skowhegan’s best interests and advocate for its mission within their own sphere of influence; however, they should not speak on behalf of the school without approval from Board or Staff.
leadership. Equally important, Trustees may listen to their constituencies and report relevant information back to the Board through Board or Staff leadership.

“This board is an eclectic and intellectually diverse group of people with exceptional extracurricular events and opportunities.”

**Board Composition**
The Board of Trustees will consist of no more than thirty-five (35) individuals. Terms are three (3) years and may be renewed by the Board in conjunction with a Trustee’s ability to commit for another term and/or a conversation with Board or Staff leadership.

**Board Meetings**
There are four (4) meetings annually that run for two to three hours. Three are generally held in New York City in January, April, and October; there is sometimes a dinner or other social/programmatic activity organized to coincide with the meeting. The fourth meeting has usually been held on campus during Trustees’ & Governors’ Weekend; typically, this occurs at the end of the third week in July. It is expected that Trustees attend meetings, with consideration of absences for special circumstances (teleconference is generally available, except at summer meetings).

**Board Committees**
Trustees are encouraged to contribute their time by serving on one or more Skowhegan Board committees. We hope that you will actively prepare for and participate in Board and Committee meetings to which you are assigned. We want to hear your voice. A list of committees can be found on page 4.

“I love being on a true working board where each member actively participates in decision making and special projects. It’s our response to all the work done by the Governors, Faculty, and Participants.”

**Fiduciary Responsibility**
The Trustees have fiduciary and oversight responsibilities to:

- Prudently manage Skowhegan’s assets, including finances and physical plant;
- Read and understand Skowhegan’s financial statements and IRS Form 990; each Trustee is responsible for the accuracy of this document;
- Adhere to Skowhegan’s bylaws;

**Confidentiality**
Trustees are expected to maintain the confidentiality of Skowhegan business matters, including Board and Committee meetings. Skowhegan will not share board members’ contact information without prior confirmation from the Trustee or Governor, and all board members are asked to use the shared Directory for Skowhegan communications, and not for commercial uses.
Fundraising

Trustees are asked to consider Skowhegan a high philanthropic priority and to participate in its fundraising initiatives to the fullest extent possible. Recognizing that major foundation and government funding sources assess the board’s financial contribution when considering Skowhegan as a beneficiary, the members of the Board commit to achieving 100% participation annually, including:

- Supporting general operations through an annual Trustee gift;
- Providing separate project support for special events (including generous participation in the annual Awards Dinner), programmatic efforts, and other initiatives as needs arise;
- During a capital or other campaign, making a separate stretch contribution;

Trustees are also asked to assist Skowhegan by amplifying fundraising activities through personal outreach and assistance. These efforts could include:

- Identifying and cultivating new donor prospects or potential Trustee candidates;
- Hosting, organizing, or participating in Skowhegan Council events;
- Attending and/or representing Skowhegan at programs of potential benefit to the school;
- Building long-term relationships with corporations, foundations, individuals, or collaborating institutions to benefit the organization;

Summary

An effective Board of Trustees reflects the combination of each individual’s time, talent, and treasure. The collective power of these qualities will provide Skowhegan with the resources and advocacy necessary to fulfill its mission and role in the community. Skowhegan exists thanks to the dedication of its leadership who play a pivotal role in advancing and promoting this program to others who care about the future and freedom of artists and the transformative effect that art can have on our culture. Thank you for recognizing the magic of Skowhegan and for working with us to safeguard Skowhegan’s future.