

As you know, Cooper Union, established in 1859, is among the nation's oldest and most distinguished institutions of higher education. The school provides a rigorous education in architecture, art or engineering enabling you to become the visionary thinkers, creators and innovators who advance positive change in the world.

Since 2015, the Board of Trustees has appointed two students to serve as Trustees to the Board with full voting rights. It is an experiment in mutual respect and cooperation and heralds the beginning of an era of improved transparency and communication. Further, it reflects a form of inclusive governance shared by very few other schools in the nation. All of the Student Trustees have been excellent stewards of Peter Cooper's legacy and stewards of the school. Their professionalism and maturity contribute to our discussions and their opinions are greatly valued.

Service on the Board can be challenging, time consuming, and exhausting. But, most important, it can be incredibly rewarding. It affords an opportunity to participate first-hand in the governance of the school at the highest level. Over the last 18 months, the Board appointed a new president, adopted Vision and Mission Statements and approved a plan to return to 100% tuition scholarships. We expect the next few years to be ones of continued growth and forward momentum as we seek to bring the plan to return to free to fruition while also focusing on broader strategic planning initiatives.

The Board is an oversight body and does not, as a general matter, involve itself in the day to day operations of the school. So, if your interest is in big picture strategy, annual budgets, fundraising, and governance, then Board service might be for you. If, on the other hand, your interests lie in addressing quality of life issues, student/faculty relations, curriculum, internal policies, etc., then you might find greater satisfaction in other governance opportunities – Joint Student Council involvement, individual student council Administrative Chair positions, Student Faculty Senate, etc. We've provided more information about serving on the Board below along with the characteristics that we are looking for in potential candidates.

I have served on the Board for 5+ years and have been chair since December 2016. Through that time, I have witnessed a lot of change but one thing remains constant. I, along with all of my fellow Trustees, am fully committed to the success of the school and to ensuring that you receive an education "equal to the best." It is an honor to serve on the Board and I am so proud and pleased that you are interested in serving as well.

Thank you for your interest in the Student Trustee position.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Warren". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rachel L. Warren
Chair, Board of Trustees

The Responsibilities of a Student Trustee

The Cooper Union Board of Trustees is a fiduciary board and with that comes certain legal duties. Paramount among those is the duty of loyalty which requires Trustees to make decisions for the benefit of the school and without regard to their personal interests. Student Trustees do not act as representatives of the student body and are not expected or required to vote in adherence to any constituent group. Rather, Student Trustees – like all other Trustees – owe their undivided commitment and fiduciary duty to the best interests of the school. Student Trustees will be subject to all of the same responsibilities as other trustees except that they shall not be required to fulfill the Board’s financial “give or get” requirement as a condition for service.

Student Trustees are required to read, sign and comply with the Code of Ethics and Conduct for Trustees ([link](#)) and adhere to all policies of the Board including its confidentiality and conflict of interest policies. Student Trustees are required to attend all Board meetings and they will also be assigned to committees in accordance with their interests and skills; and there shall be one Student Trustee appointed to (i) the Governance Committee; and (ii) the Free Education Committee. Student Trustees shall not be permitted to attend executive sessions of the Board or committee meetings where their attendance would present an actual or potential conflict of interest, including sessions that relate to academic governance matters or employment and personnel matters.

Student Trustees should be fully engaged with the entire student body so that the views, across all three schools, can be articulated to the Board. Further, we expect Student Trustees to report back on the activities of the Board as appropriate in light of considerations of confidentiality.

Qualifications

To be eligible to serve as the Student Trustee to the Board of Trustees, a student must be (i) a full-time undergraduate matriculated student in good academic and disciplinary standing; and (ii) able to serve a term defined by two consecutive academic years.

The Appointment Process

The student body, under the auspices of the Joint Student Council, will nominate 3 students (by whatever selection process they deem appropriate) for recommendation to the Board’s Governance Committee. Thereafter, if all qualifications for service are satisfied, one of those candidates will be nominated by the Governance Committee to be elected by the full Board of Trustees for a two-year term. The two Student Trustees shall serve in staggered two-year terms.

Characteristics of a Student Trustee

Members of the Board are selected on the basis of their demonstrated interest in and/or advocacy on behalf of Cooper Union, proven skills, professional experience and a financial commitment to the school. The Board has developed the following list of characteristics specifically for Student Trustees. While we recognize that no one person will embody all of these characteristics, the Governance Committee and Board will be looking to appoint a well-qualified individual.

CHARACTERISTICS FOR CONSIDERATION IN NOMINATING POTENTIAL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Personal stake: Involvement in the work of Cooper Union and interests that align with the values, mission, and academic disciplines of Cooper Union.

Outreach within the Cooper Union community: Involvement in academic and/or extra-curricular activities with exposure to a diversity of opinions.

Financial awareness: Awareness of, and appreciation for, the role of philanthropy in Cooper Union's past, current and future. While a financial background is not required, Student Trustees will be expected to familiarize themselves with the school's financial condition in order to participate in votes on the annual budget and other financial matters.

Intellectual leadership: Vision and scholarship to contribute to the implementation of Cooper Union's strategic plan.

Volunteer leadership: A record of civic engagement and commitment to serving Cooper Union and all of its constituents in ambassadorship role.

Familiarity with the work of Cooper Union: A demonstrated interest in the purpose, goals, programs, functioning, and governance of the school.

Diversity: Representation from the varied populations – racial, gender, ethnic, etc. – that comprise Cooper Union's city, its alumni and its student body, current and future.

Community involvement: Interest and/or willingness to engage the East Village community in the life of Cooper Union, and to encourage support of plans to revitalize the surrounding neighborhood.

Compatibility: Willingness to work well with current Trustees and add to the existing skill set of the Board.

Sufficient commitment: The first priority for all students is their academic studies. The role of trustee requires a significant commitment of time and should be balanced with other extra-curricular activities.