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The University is governed by a board of 13 members, six selected by the state legislature and seven self-perpetuating life members, in accord with the will of Thomas Green Clemson. The Board of Trustees is primarily responsible for adopting the long-range objectives of the University and the basic policies for achieving them; providing policy instruction for long-range planning; adopting the statutes of the University; electing the president of the University; employing the secretary of the board; maintaining ownership of University assets; and overseeing the evaluation of the University.

The president is the chief executive officer of the University, providing leadership to all phases of University planning, coordinating the operations of all units of the University, carrying out major University public relations functions, evaluating the results of University plans, and appointing personnel who report to the president. The day-to-day operations of the University are administered by the president and executive officers for advancement, public service and agriculture, and student affairs.

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is the chief academic officer of the University. The Provost is responsible directly to the president for all academic matters and has administrative jurisdiction over teaching and computing services. Vice provosts assist in administering and performing duties in coordinating graduate and undergraduate curricula; supervising computer information services; the libraries, scholarship and award programs; and other duties assigned by the Provost.

A cademic deans are the chief administrative officers of their individual colleges and report directly to the Provost. They provide leadership in formulating and carrying out educational policy, review and make recommendations on personnel matters, and carry out and administer the academic and financial affairs of their colleges.

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