Founded in 1852, Mills College is an independent liberal arts college for women with graduate programs for both women and men. Inspired by a teaching philosophy that comes from its long-standing dedication to women's education, Mills College provides an environment that encourages mutual respect and cooperation. The College strives to be an exemplary higher educational institution committed to excellence and to advancing students in their intellectual and professional pursuits.

Members of the Board of Trustees of Mills College serve as fiduciaries of the College in overseeing institutional affairs in accordance with the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the College, periodic statements of mission and institutional plans. The board works in strategic partnership with the president of the College, and each trustee brings individual expertise, experience, wisdom and ideas about the wider world to all board deliberations. In serving in these capacities, trustees of Mills College accept the responsibility to fulfill certain obligations which include the following:

1. Individual trustees are expected to demonstrate a continuing dedication to the College and to the value of a liberal arts education for women and graduate studies for both women and men, and they should strive to uphold and strengthen the College’s tradition of excellence and its outstanding reputation.

2. Trustees should commit to the values of diversity in all aspects of the College’s operations.

3. Trustees are expected to attend regularly and participate in plenary meetings of the board which are held three times each year. Trustees are also expected to review and familiarize themselves with materials distributed in preparation for such meetings so that the actions of the board are based upon an informed consideration of the issues.

4. Each trustee should serve on and participate actively in the work of at least two committees of the board in order to gain exposure to multiple issues confronting the College and to bring her/his insights and input to the work of the board’s committees. Committee assignments are made annually by the chair of the board in collaboration with the Committee on Trustees with an eye towards affording individual trustees a significant opportunity to bring their particular talents and skills to the work of the board.

5. Trustees should participate in other board functions and activities of the College. Such participation strengthens those activities and presents members of the board with opportunities to familiarize themselves with the scope, diversity, and issues existing in
the life of the College. Board members are requested to participate in Convocation and Commencement ceremonies.

6. Trustees should make Mills a top philanthropic priority and provide financial support to the College by making personal contributions to annual giving and special fundraising campaigns and by the identification and solicitation of potential contributors to the College. Trustees are expected to make an annual contribution at a level consistent with individual capacity. As a guideline, each trustee is expected to make an annual contribution of at least $5,000, in accordance with means and ability, from her/his own resources or through a combination of personal funds and personal fundraising efforts (such as matching gifts). The participation of each trustee in fundraising efforts on both an annual and campaign basis enables the College to solicit funds from others by using its trustees as examples of commitment.

7. Trustees should promote the College knowledgeably to alumnae/i, potential students, donors, and other friends among the public at large, in business and the professions, and, when called upon, to foundations and governmental agencies. Personal involvement by members of the board can be of invaluable assistance in securing and achieving the goals of the College and in its continuing growth and prosperity.

8. Trustees should commit themselves to serving the College as a whole, rather than representing the interests of any particular constituency, to ensure that the actions of the board are taken for the benefit of Mills College and not for the benefit of any individual interest or group. In this regard, trustees should refrain from making judgments on the basis of incomplete information received from individuals or groups with any real or perceived grievance. Substantive information relating to issues should be referred by individual trustees to the chair of the board or to the president of the College.

9. Trustees should recognize that the board is a corporate body approving College policies and monitoring the implementation of those policies, while deferring to the administration of the College for the management of College business.

10. Trustees are encouraged to contribute their ideas and suggestions during board deliberations, and to engage in honest debate about issues that are within the board’s purview. Discussions should be candid and respectful of diverse opinions. This type of dialogue requires trust among trustees. That trust is in part based on confidentiality. Trustees are expected to maintain complete confidentiality as to the specifics of board discussions at all board and committee meetings, trusting that what is said will not be repeated or attributed outside of the meeting. In particular, the agenda topics as well as specific discussions at executive sessions of the board and committees must be held in complete confidence, and not shared with any individual beyond the confines of the meeting participants. Trustees should refer all questions from outside the board to the chair of the board or the president of the College for appropriate response or public disclosure.
11. The board speaks with one voice, and the chair of the board is the board’s official spokesperson. The president of the College is generally the spokesperson for the College. Unless designated as a spokesperson for the board in certain situations or when the board agrees that information should be shared publicly (such as in the case of special honors or awards), individual trustees should take care to speak, and be perceived as speaking, only for herself or himself and not for the College nor for the board as a whole. Matters brought to the attention of individual trustees should be referred to the chair of the board.

12. Trustees should refrain from seeking any special favors from the president or the administrative staff of the College.

13. Trustees should assist in identifying prospective board members.

14. Trustees should participate in the periodic assessment of the full board’s performance.

All trustees are elected by the full board based on recommendations from the Committee on Trustees with the exception of the President of the Alumnae Association of Mills College (AAMC) and trustees designated by the AAMC (Alumnae Trustees), and President of the College.

Elected trustees serve three years and may be nominated for re-election for a maximum of up to two additional three-year terms before they must retire from board service for a period of at least one year. Exceptions include Recent Graduate Trustees who serve a maximum of three years, Trustees Emeritae/Emeriti who serve six-year terms, and Honorary Trustees who serve at the pleasure of the board without term limits. At the conclusion of the term of each trustee eligible for re-election, the Committee on Trustees makes an assessment of the trustee, which includes consideration of a trustee’s board participation, contributions to the College, and fulfillment of the responsibilities set forth above.

Trustees accept expenses of board attendance as personal expenses. The rewards for service as trustees are pride in the continuing growth and development of the College and the pleasure of working with a diverse group of individuals committed to the success of Mills College.