



Presidential Search Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 22, 2021
3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

A live stream of the meeting for public viewing will also take place on YouTube at the following link:

<http://www.westfield.ma.edu/live>

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Review and approval of minutes from March 23, 2021 meeting – Search Committee
3. Discussion and recommendation of presidential candidates to the Board of Trustees
4. Adjourn

Attachments

- Minutes from March 23, 2021 meeting – Draft



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Presidential Search Committee

March 23, 2021

Minutes

Meeting held virtually via Zoom

In accordance with Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker’s Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, § 20 dated March 12, 2020.

A live stream of the open session of the meeting for public viewing also took place on YouTube.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Dr. Robert Martin, Chair, Melissa Alvarado, Vice Chair, Dr. Claudia Ciano-Boyce, Junior Delgado, George Flevotomos, Dr. Brian Jennings, Ron'na J'Q Lytle, Dr. Juline Mills, Thalita Neves, Thomas Simard, Stephen Taksar, Dr. Gloria Williams, and Jean Beal, secretary to the committee

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Lydia Martinez-Alvarez and Dr. Jalisa Williams, ex officio resource to the committee

Also participating remotely from the presidential search firm WittKieffer were Lucy Leske, senior partner, Robert Luke, consultant, and Christine Pendleton, senior associate.

Trustee Robert Martin, chair of the committee, called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM and announced each of the committee members participating remotely as listed above. It was announced that only the open session portion of the meeting was being livestreamed, and, as a result will be captured as recorded.

At 2:03 PM, **MOTION** made by Dr. Brian Jennings, seconded by Dr. Gloria Williams, to approve the open session portion of the minutes of the March 16, 2021, March 17, 2021, and March 18, 2021 Presidential Search Committee meetings.

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** taken:

Melissa Alvarado	Yes	Lydia Martinez-Alvarez	Not in meeting
Dr. Claudia Ciano-Boyce	Yes	Dr. Juline Mills	Yes
Junior Delgado	Yes	Thalita Neves	Yes
George Flevotomos	Yes	Thomas Simard	Yes
Dr. Brian Jennings	Yes	Stephen Taksar	Yes
Ron'na J'Q Lytle	Yes	Dr. Gloria Williams	Yes
Motion passed unanimously.		Dr. Robert Martin	Yes

Discussion of finalist interview structure and format. Trustee Martin has communicated with the appropriate people at the University requesting on-campus interviews with the finalists, which will be permissible following the University's COVID-19 safety protocols. The visits could be structured for 1 ½-2 days and give the candidates the opportunity for campus and city tours. Interviews with large groups (faculty, staff, students) will take place via Zoom and smaller groups (union leaders, chairs, trustees, cabinet, etc.) could take place socially distanced in a large room, together with Zoom participants. On the evening of the first day, each candidate could give a plenary presentation via Zoom to the entire University community about their background, interest and motivation for a WSU presidency, what they see as challenges and opportunities, and where they see Higher Ed going in the next five years. If colleagues participate in this presentation, the meetings on the subsequent day can be more efficient and have more time for questions.

Trustee Martin continued that given where the search is in timing, and if the committee is successful in identifying five candidates at this meeting, WittKieffer has suggested having the interview process take place concurrently with the reference checks in order to start the interview process earlier. The downside would be inviting candidates to campus and then deciding we are not interested. There is some risk, but a low probability. There is a higher risk of waiting until reference checks are done before scheduling interviews, as it increases the likelihood that one or more candidates may drop out. Recommendations will not be made to the Board of Trustees until after the reference checks are complete and the finalists have been interviewed. The BHE does not require the reference checks to be done before the campus interviews. By making a decision today, interviews could start the week of April 5. Reactions were given:

- Agree with this process. The committee had previously discussed the issue of certain candidates not being able to come to campus and we want to be uniform with all interviews. WittKieffer stated that before COVID, they had international candidates that were interviewed by video. Everyone has needed to pivot and adapt in this pandemic. WittKieffer is not aware that any candidates might have reasons not to come. The state's regulations have become more flexible in requiring a negative test result within 72 hours of arrival or being fully vaccinated.
- On-campus interviews are important for many reasons – it is a good selling point for us. There is some concern about candidates that are in other searches. Other campuses are doing finalist interviews by Zoom. Does having ours on campus elongate the process? There would be three meetings that would be different than virtual interviews – the tours of the city and campus and dinner meeting with the Board of Trustees. There would not be a substantial difference in the timing as there would still be the same number of meetings and need 1 ½ days.
- If the reference checks are done concurrently, those results would take at least two weeks.
- WittKieffer has performed the social media checks but needs to complete the one-on-one calls with references.
- A tentative meeting had been scheduled for April 8 to receive the background reports. If the committee waited for those, interviews could not start until the week of April 12. The interviews could start a week sooner if background checks were being done concurrently.
- Initially, the committee discussed moving five candidates to be referenced and bringing 3-5 to campus. Could 6 candidates be moved forward for referencing? WittKieffer said that 5 is a good number and to remember that these candidates are being asked to go public at the same time. Proceeding this way, the committee would pick 5 as finalists to reference and come to campus.
- Most candidates are holding public roles now. There is a lower risk to bringing them here sooner. The expectation is that candidates come to campus, but accommodations will be made for those who cannot come.

- There was support from the committee in proceeding with scheduling interviews and conducting reference checks concurrently.
- If successful in identifying five finalists at this meeting, WittKieffer will contact them and determine if they are still interested as their names will then become public. Until we hear back from WittKieffer with a go ahead, the names need to be kept confidential.

Executive Session. Trustee Martin stated the committee would be going into executive session for the purpose of discussing candidates pursuant to Open Meeting Law, G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a) #8, as holding these discussions in an open session would have a detrimental effect on the University’s ability to attract qualified applicants. Once in executive session, the live stream will end. The committee will adjourn from executive session and not reconvene in open session.

At 2:28 PM, **MOTION** made by Dr. Gloria Williams, seconded by Thalita Neves, to enter into executive session.

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** taken:

Melissa Alvarado	Yes	Lydia Martinez-Alvarez	Not in meeting
Dr. Claudia Ciano-Boyce	Yes	Dr. Juline Mills	Yes
Junior Delgado	Yes	Thalita Neves	Yes
George Flevotomos	Yes	Thomas Simard	Yes
Dr. Brian Jennings	Yes	Stephen Taksar	Yes
Ron'na J'Q Lytle	Yes	Dr. Gloria Williams	Yes
Motion passed unanimously.		Dr. Robert Martin	Yes

The committee entered executive session at 2:28 PM and did not reconvene in open session.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- Open Session Minutes from March 16, 2021 meeting – Draft
- Open Session Minutes from March 17, 2021 meeting – Draft
- Open Session Minutes from March 18, 2021 meeting – Draft

Secretary’s Certificate

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the approved open session portion of the minutes of the Westfield State University Presidential Search Committee meeting held on March 23, 2021.

Jean Beal, Secretary

Date