



BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Presidential Search Committee

October 28, 2020
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 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, Lydia Martinez-Alvarez, Dr. Juline Mills, Thalita Neves, Thomas Simard, Stephen Taksar, and Dr. Gloria Williams

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Ali Salehi and Dr. Jalisa Williams

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 4:31 PM and announced the committee members participating remotely.

There being no comments or questions on the minutes, **MOTION** made by Dr. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Alvarado, to approve the minutes of the October 14, 2020 Presidential Search Committee meeting.

There being no discussion, ROLL CALL VOTE taken:

Melissa Alvarado	Yes	Lydia Martinez-Alvarez	Yes
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
Dr. Robert Martin	Not voting		

Motion passed.

Trustee Martin thanked Dr. Mills for drafting the Presidential Search Guide. He noted that we would discuss the Search Guide at the end of the meeting if there was sufficient time, but he wanted to address an issue that was identified in the Guide. He stated that although the intent is to operate the committee by consensus, due to the committee having 14 members and the potential for a tie vote, he would not be voting on any matters that require a vote.

To provide context to what was discussed at the last meeting regarding President Saigo's interest in the permanent position, Trustee Martin stated the Board of Higher Education (BHE) Guidelines generally prohibit interim presidents from serving as candidates for the permanent presidency. Because of the pandemic, the BHE Commissioner indicated he would consider an exception to the Guidelines, allowing interim presidents to be considered if the Board requested it, and asked the Boards to let him know as soon as possible if interims were interested, but not later than the posting of the profile. Chair Queenin had a conversation with Interim President Saigo to see if he was interested, and if so, it would be brought it to the Board for consideration. It was then questioned whether President Saigo could be asked if he was interested in extending his term and Trustee Martin indicated that it could.

Presidential Leadership. WittKieffer abstracted the following key topics (boldfaced) from the listening sessions and surveys, and the committee discussed and identified key qualities (bullets) desired in a new president with respect to the following issues and challenges.

Vision for the future. What is the president's job in helping you pursue your vision? What do you imagine for Westfield State and how can the president help you?

- Promoting increased collaboration with entire campus to fulfill and refine the current vision, not create a new one.
- Addressing the present situation and working toward the future with progressive thinking, understanding the trends in education and society.
- Possessing a skill set for whatever the 21st century holds, being grounded and not chasing current culture.
- Our goal is to be the premier public institution in the northeast region with student engagement and success, and do not want someone to move us away from that.
- Understanding the bond that exists between the units on campus and with the public, helping to create more public initiatives for the community.
- Selling the University's mission, vision, and values internally and to external constituencies.
- Focusing on marketing the institution as promoting both workforce alignment and honoring the liberal arts core of Higher Ed.

The role of the president in topics like enrollment or finance.

- A large part of a student's choice to attend college has to do with the feeling of belonging when they step on campus, not graduation rates and employment statistics. Ensure that creating that feeling aligns with our mission by focusing on the student, remembering that facilities and little things are important for them, such as social spaces, athletics, and food choices.
- Technical skills are less important than high-level emotional intelligence, encompassing communication, empathy, and respect, in order to influence human capabilities. Someone who understands the economic structure of how an organization in Higher Ed runs and how to generate revenue, manage expenses and make allocation resources with priorities.
- Being externally focused on fundraising is important, engaging alumni, establishing relationships, building visibility and reputation, and expanding the reach. Work with other foundations and businesses that can provide funding for the University, investing in fundraising to generate the desired return. There is some logic to spending time 30% on strategy, 30% on campus operations, and 30% on fundraising. Follow the Strategic Plan to invest and leverage resources now for future needs, as opposed to being too involved in technical and operational issues.
- Fundraising should also be viewed in the context of public education as a social and economic public good. Thirty percent of operating revenue comes from state appropriations, so fundraising is also becoming part of the advocacy and sustained public commitment for public higher education.
- WittKieffer stated that expectations need to be set on the following areas identified as important: diversity and inclusion, talent engagement, fundraising, and collaboration, so that progress can be measured.

- Create goals and ask the president how they will help achieve those expectations by harnessing our existing resources to get to the next level.
- Someone who is capable in many areas, with the management skillset to hire experts in their fields, support them, and hold them accountable. Ask candidates to give an example in their professional experience of how they handled having an employee who was not meeting expected standards.

Expectations of how the president will help with academic excellence.

- Again, hire experts in the field. Collective bargaining has a strict procedure for moving to tenure and promotion to hold people accountable.
- Show demonstrated success in all qualities being sought. The president should value and help faculty as they are the way the institution connects with students. Sell and advocate that vision of faculty at the state level, to the community, and to families. The way the faculty and staff are treated on campus helps with the energy the students see and feel.
- Encourage others to be leaders who know and believe in the vision. Accountability should be done through data resources to make grounded decisions. Possess visible skills to develop relationships and interact with stakeholders in the University to empower others to do their jobs. Develop relationships with K-12 schools to collaborate on ideas outside the box.

Qualities or experiences the president should have.

- Compassionate, caring, and understanding of what people are dealing with in this pandemic.
- Teamwork, accountability, fundraising.
- Knowledge of the position and a knowledge of what they do not know, which should lead to a delegation of those responsibilities to others capable of handling.
- How they treat us and how they are treated when coming on campus.
- Understanding of financial structures and the ability to work with Finance and Administration to move the bottom line of the institution to a stable place.
- Soft skills of culture building and rapport. Hard skills should be defined. Awareness of this institution being longstanding and established and being comfortable leading and stewarding a place like Westfield State.
- Has overcome adversity themselves, giving a good example of an adverse situation and how they approached it.
- Ability and experience to build relationships and engage and partner with the community and campus constituencies, being comfortable executing ideas that have worked for them in prior situations.
- WittKieffer stated that everyone has a responsibility to ensure the president is successful. For a president to tap the talent of the organization and build teams around problem solving, the campus needs to welcome them with fresh eyes, being open to listening to a different perspective, style, strategy, questions and suggestions. Give them time and space to get to know you. Take advantage of the talent you are hiring.
- Leading a complex organization that has multiple constituencies, preferably in Higher Ed.
- The president needs interpersonal, emotional intelligence and needs to be open to knowing and hearing us. We need to meet these candidates in person.
- Ms. Martinez-Alvarez left the meeting at 5:48 PM.
- Champion what we are doing and have action points to be certain we are moving forward and not backwards. Come to us where we are with respect.
- There has been a disconnect lately on how the Board of Trustees and the campus community has viewed success. We need to find out where and how that disconnect happened to set the next person up for success. One step is by having five Trustees on the committee to understand and make sure the Board is agreeable with what the committee is doing.
- Understands the new demographics and the older adults coming back to college. The Latino population is growing and the campus needs to be more inclusive of all those students.
- Dr. Mills left the meeting at 6:07 PM.

Next steps: Review the Presidential Search Guide and Institutional Background for the Presidential Profile. Specific editing comments should be sent to the committee assistant. WittKieffer will create a first draft of the Leadership Profile, incorporating qualities and challenges pulled from the surveys, listening sessions, and committee meetings. To be discussed at the next meeting: Presidential Search Guide, Institutional Background, and draft Presidential Profile.

Next meeting: November 18, 2020 from 4:30-6:00 pm.

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Dr. Ciano-Boyce, seconded by Ms. Alvarado, to adjourn.

There being no discussion, ROLL CALL VOTE taken:

Melissa Alvarado	Yes	Lydia Martinez-Alvarez	left meeting
Dr. Claudia Ciano-Boyce	Yes	Dr. Juline Mills	left meeting
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
Dr. Robert Martin	Not voting		

Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 6:11 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a) Draft Minutes of October 14, 2020
- b) WSU Presidential Search Guide – Draft
- c) Candidate Evaluation Rubric Draft to accompany Presidential Search Guide
- d) Code of Ethics to accompany Presidential Search Guide
- e) Search Committee Charge to accompany Presidential Search Guide