



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Presidential Search Committee

November 18, 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, Dr. Juline Mills, Ali Salehi, Thomas Simard, Stephen Taksar, Dr. Gloria Williams, and Dr. Jalisa Williams

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Lydia Martinez-Alvarez and Thalita Neves

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 4:32 PM and announced all the committee members participating remotely as listed above.

There being no comments or questions on the minutes, **MOTION** made by Ali Salehi, seconded by Gloria Williams, to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2020 Presidential Search Committee meeting.

There being no discussion, ROLL CALL VOTE taken:

Melissa Alvarado	Yes	Dr. Juline Mills	Yes
Dr. Claudia Ciano-Boyce	Yes	Ali Salehi	Yes
Junior Delgado	Yes	Thomas Simard	Yes
George Flevotomos	Yes	Stephen Taksar	Yes
Dr. Brian Jennings	Yes	Dr. Gloria Williams	Yes
Ron'na J'Q Lytle	Yes	Dr. Robert Martin	Not voting

Motion passed.

Trustee Martin stated that he gave an update on the search committee to the Board of Trustees at their monthly meeting yesterday, emphasizing that reestablishing trust and collaboration across the campus community was essential. The Leadership Profile and updated timeline will need to be shared with the Board, the Commissioner of Higher Education, and the campus community.

WSU Presidential Search Guide Discussion.

- Tie vote. No one objected to Trustee Martin’s plan to not vote on committee matters in order to avoid a tie vote.
- Change of committee membership due to extenuating circumstance. The replacement of a committee member from the same constituency will be chosen, following the same selection procedures used in the initial selection of committee members (see Search Guide). A replacement could catch up with the process through conversation and documentation.
- Process of search firm in the screening of candidates. WittKieffer will follow up on every lead and application/nomination. In their work the consultants will initially sort the candidates into three separate groups of meeting and exceeding criteria, not meeting criteria, or meeting some but not all criteria, and then suggesting the candidates they feel are at the top of the list. The consultants can provide this information to the committee or simply present the candidates in chronological order of application. The committee discussed relying on the expertise of WittKieffer to do pre-work and organize the candidates, but not at the expense of the committee viewing all applicants. It was suggested and approved by the following motion to follow the approach of having access to WittKieffer’s sorting, but reviewing all candidates and deciding on own as a committee.

MOTION made by Mr. Taksar, seconded by Mr. Simard, with regard to screening candidates, to request that WittKieffer give the committee access to all candidates and to provide the benefit of their expertise in sorting the candidates into groups.

There being no discussion, ROLL CALL VOTE taken:

Melissa Alvarado	Yes	Dr. Juline Mills	Yes
Dr. Claudia Ciano-Boyce	Yes	Ali Salehi	Yes
Junior Delgado	Yes	Thomas Simard	Yes
George Flevotomos	Yes	Stephen Taksar	Yes
Dr. Brian Jennings	Yes	Dr. Gloria Williams	Yes
Ron'na J'Q Lytle	Yes	Dr. Robert Martin	Not voting

Motion passed.

- At Westfield State, a diversity plan is followed by monitoring the ethnic and racial backgrounds of candidates to ascertain that we have developed a diverse pool of candidates.
- Background checks. The best way for the committee to find out a candidate’s track record on interactions with faculty and organized labor on campuses is to, in addition to reviewing resumes, study their cover letter. The three things that should be in the cover letter are: why they want to come to WSU; what it is in their background that has prepared them to be a president at WSU, and a values statement that gives insight about what they care about. During reference and media checks, these will also be examined. At interviews, candidates can be asked about their experience in collective bargaining, giving examples of successes or areas of concern and conflict.
- Google searches on candidates are not recommended to be done by the committee. WittKieffer will do searches in the first engagement and then dig deeper as needed. If there are any flags, they will be brought to the committee’s attention. Information found or received on a candidate by committee members should not be shared with the committee by email. Call WittKieffer, but do not give the candidate’s name as there is a need to be careful of public information and maligning someone publicly. Do’s and don’ts of candidate review will be revisited closer to screening.
- Executive session overview. Trustee Martin stated the committee will follow the process described in the Open Meeting Law for going into executive session. The meeting will start in open session, the purpose of the executive session will be announced, followed by a roll call vote and the question to each member if they are alone in the room so that the conversation cannot be overheard. It will then be announced whether the meeting will return to an open session at the

end of the meeting. Trustee Martin will also contact the Attorney General's office on the process as suggested by the BHE Guidelines.

- Committee attendance. There should be specific parameters on missing the discussion and deliberation of candidates. It was suggested that if a committee member misses two or more meetings, the chair have a conversation to find out what is going on. Discussion took place on not voting for a candidate if a committee member was absent for the interview. Although that may give the candidate one less vote because of an absent committee member, if the votes are that close, the candidate probably will not be moving forward. It was agreed that if someone misses a meeting, they should catch up from reviewing the minutes and documents, but if they miss a candidate interview, they will not vote on that candidate.
- Alternate committee members. An idea was given of naming an alternate to the committee in the event that a replacement was needed but could not be found from a particular constituency. The consensus was that it was not desired or needed to expand the committee, given the process of replacements previously discussed.
- Role of the chair as ex-officio member of subcommittees. It is not anticipated that there will be subcommittees. If the chair is not voting in the committee, he will not vote in subcommittees. If the chair's presence would help for a quorum, he could be counted. Dean Mills suggested that Roberts Rules prevents the chair from being a member of a subcommittee.
- Requirements for moving candidates forward. It is expected to move candidates forward by consensus. A definition is needed for what will be required to move candidates forward. WittKieffer reminded the committee that the only point at which a formal vote is needed is when the committee agrees on the group of finalists. Only a consensus is needed for the first interviews, not a vote. You are agreeing to see a range of ten people, some of whom may be lukewarm to you. Considering the finalists requires more precision, and although a consensus is desired, a final vote is needed, either individually or as a slate grouped together. You need to define a clear majority. For the first interviews, a rubric will be provided, but not an algorithm, which will assist in separating the candidates you are interested in from those you are not. Communicate around the table, giving individual reasons for liking or disliking the qualities of a candidate. If the consensus is that all the candidates interviewed do not meet the criteria desired, you can interview more because there was no vote and you are learning throughout the process.
- Minimum qualifications and desired characteristics. To be discussed in the Profile.
- Post search evaluation. Great idea as a resource for future searches.

Leadership Profile Discussion.

- The institutional background numbers need to be checked for accuracy.
- In the relationship with the BHE, primary duties in the fifth bullet, change to: "having competency with private fundraising and alumni and commitment to advocate for public funding for a substantial public good." That differentiates between public and private higher Ed.
- This is WittKieffer's standard template. It was agreed to request the WSU Marketing Department to redesign the Profile with our own branding, advocating to showcase the drive, energy and distinctiveness that WSU has.
- In addition to the Profile, there is a much abridged document, almost identical to the executive summary, which is the ad to be placed.
- Finances were included in the Profile, which shows honesty and bravery in tackling this issue.
- The tone is good. We are asking a lot and need to think about what we are giving in return other than headaches. Try to capture that and find someone who can help us continue to be who we are right now.
- The section on opportunities and expectations for leadership are spot on. Building trust is described exactly and other bullets are descriptive of the challenges that exist.
- In the role of the president, it states reporting to the Board of Trustees, and then below, it states continually reporting to the Board of Trustees, which seems to read like "the most

important emphasis of the job is reporting to the Board.” On the other side, the relationship between the president and the Board is pretty critical. Given the history of the last couple of years, putting that emphasis may be helpful. Alternatively, the first sentence could start, “Chief executive officer” and put the reporting to the Board of Trustees at the bottom of the paragraph.

- The roles are clear, but find a way to make a stronger statement of good relationships with students.
- Under duties and responsibilities, add, “Working collaboratively with the unions on campus.” Do we want to keep a number on a seven-member cabinet?
- Dr. Mills left the meeting at 5:59 PM.
- Under enrollment, talk about student recruitment in general and more specific in terms of our strength in non-traditional students who will be future of the institution. Also talk about communities surrounding us with high populations of people of color, such as Holyoke and Springfield. Capture our diversity on campus with statements about applying to be designated as a HSI institution, the Urban Ed program, the high population of first-generation students, and more diverse images in the Profile. WittKieffer suggested balancing length with information and will work with the marketing department to put links and videos in the Profile to drive candidates to interact with the website to explore more. There is a balance of adding information to the Profile or sharing verbally with the candidate during an interview.

Next steps are as follows:

- Individual feedback on the draft Profile to be sent to WittKieffer in the next few days, without copying committee members. Trustee Martin will talk with the marketing department about photographs, visuals, and branding in the document.
- The Profile will be finalized and shared with committee and sent to the Board and BHE for approval.
- At the next meeting, there should be formal approval of the Profile (which could be a conditional vote), but WittKieffer can start advertising without a formal vote if everyone is okay with the document. They would share it with the committee before sending anything out. A final draft should be completed by the week of November 30 so advertising can start in December. Once the document is finalized, Trustee Martin will email the campus community on behalf of the search committee directing them to the webpage to reveal the Profile prior to it going out so that it doesn’t get buried in the holiday break.
- It was requested to finalize the procedure for moving candidates through the process at the December meeting.
- Dr. Gloria Williams left the meeting at 6:13 PM.
- The next meeting will be Wednesday, December 2, from 4:30-6:00 PM.

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Dr. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Lytle, to adjourn.

There being no discussion, ROLL CALL VOTE taken:

Melissa Alvarado	Yes	Dr. Juline Mills	Left meeting
Dr. Claudia Ciano-Boyce	Yes	Ali Salehi	Yes
Junior Delgado	Yes	Thomas Simard	Yes
George Flevotomos	Yes	Stephen Taksar	Yes
Dr. Brian Jennings	Yes	Dr. Gloria Williams	Left meeting
Ron'na J'Q Lytle	Yes	Dr. Robert Martin	Not voting

Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 6:16 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a) Draft Minutes of October 28, 2020
- b) WSU Presidential Search Guide – Draft
- c) Leadership Profile – Draft