



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
Presidential Search Committee

**February 24, 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.

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**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, Ali Salehi, Thomas Simard, Stephen Taksar, Dr. Gloria Williams, and Jean Beal, secretary to the committee. Dr. Jalisa Williams did not participate in the meeting.

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 3:02 PM and announced all committee members participating remotely as listed above. It was announced that only the open session portion of the meeting was being live streamed, and, as a result would be captured as recorded.

Trustee Martin stated that Open Meeting Law (OML) regulations impact the structure of the committee, and the OML provision dealing with executive session reads that if a public body (Board of Trustees) opts to convene a preliminary screening committee (search committee), the committee must contain less than a quorum of the parent body. Trustee Salehi was added to the committee as a community member. When he was subsequently appointed as a trustee, there became six trustees on the search committee, which is a quorum, violating that provision of the OML. A legal opinion was sought and received that confirmed the understanding that six trustees could not serve on the search committee. Trustee Salehi has therefore stepped down from the committee.

Stephen Taksar and Dr. Juline Mills joined the meeting at 3:08 PM.

Trustee Martin continued that the committee now has 13 members. He will continue to try not to vote, but if his vote is needed, he will exercise that. The fact that he had decided not to vote in the committee did not change the answer surrounding the need to remove a trustee from the committee.

At 3:10 PM, **MOTION** made by Brian Jennings, seconded by George Flevotomos, to approve the minutes of the January 29, 2021 Presidential Search Committee meeting.

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

Melissa Alvarado	Yes	Lydia Martinez-Alvarez	Not yet 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
<b>Motion passed unanimously.</b>		Dr. Robert Martin	Not Voting

Overview and update on the pool. WittKieffer stated that the candidate materials were in the secure website and additional applications were not expected. There have been 87 nominations and 68 applications. Numerous nominations turned into applications and many also declined. There is considerable interest in the search. WittKieffer has engaged with several of the candidates through phone calls and Zoom conversations, many of whom have exceeded Westfield State's criteria. Candidates were requested to voluntarily indicate their backgrounds in connection with diversity. It is most critical to identify whether the group to be interviewed exhibits the desired diversity. There are 13 female candidates and 15 diverse candidates, with two candidates self-reporting in both categories. Diverse is recognized as non-white as identified by federal guidelines. According to the Board of Higher Education (BHE) Guidelines, WittKieffer made only a basic sort of applicants on whether they did or did not meet the basic criteria.

Discussion of selection process. At the last meeting, it was agreed that the committee would have the opportunity to speak about each and every applicant. The following process honors that and allows the committee to move efficiently but fairly through the group of candidates. Reaction and approval from the committee was requested.

- As candidates are reviewed, the initial goal will be to preliminarily sort them into three categories of "interview," "not interview," and "uncertain or discuss further."
- Today's sorting is preliminary. There is no expectation of determining a final list of 8-10 people to interview, and no expectation that the sorting will be final. Subsequent discussions may result in moving candidates from one category to another.
- It is hoped to make a first pass through all applicants at today's meeting and continue more in-depth discussions at the March 3 meeting. The intention is that no committee member feels locked into any decisions. Any candidate can be revisited.
- For each candidate, someone from the committee should state that they do or do not recommend interviewing or discussing further, and the reasons why, simply to get reaction and discussion started. Everyone needs to feel free to speak.
- Once all candidates have been reviewed, the committee will go back to talk about specific candidates. The role of search firms is limited in the BHE Guidelines, and they will not share their recommendations on interviews. Specific questions about candidates can be asked.
- The ideal number of candidates to interview is 10, (with maybe an alternate), in order to identify 3-4 finalists. The committee was fine with this process.

Planning and scheduling the Community Information Session. It seems to make sense to have the community information session after the March 3 meeting. The advantage will be having more information to report with the identification of a semi-finalist pool and its composition. The topics to share will include:

- Overview of timeline and the hiring of WittKieffer as search consultants
- Composition/Membership of the Search Committee
- Committee Operating Principles/Guidelines (WSU Presidential Search Guide)

- Review of Survey Results and Listening Sessions
- Construction and summary of Presidential Leadership Profile
- Advertising Plan and WittKieffer recruitment
- Composition of candidate pool
- Next Steps: Identification of semi-finalists
  - Semi-finalist interviews
  - Identification of finalists and campus visits
  - Search Committee Recommendation to Board of Trustees
  - Board of Trustees/Commissioner, DHE

The community information session should be scheduled at a time to accommodate as many committee members and campus community as possible. A week’s notice with an agenda of what will be discussed needs to be given, and it would be helpful to run the session twice at different times to allow second shift employees to attend. Two dates will be chosen for one session at 12:00 noon and the other at 3:00 p.m. and the topics to be presented will be shared among the committee members attending.

Executive session-discussion of candidates. The state’s Open Meeting Law makes provision for searches in the preliminary stage to review candidates in executive session, as many will not apply unless they have the assurance of confidentiality. Once candidates come to campus, there is no expectation of confidentiality. The committee will go into executive session for the remainder of this and the entire March 3 meeting. For those watching the live stream, the committee will adjourn from executive session and will not be reconvening in open session.

Trustee Martin stated the purpose of the executive session would be for the discussion of candidates for the position of president, pursuant to Open Meeting Law, G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a) #8 and that having the discussion in open session would be detrimental to the University’s ability to attract qualified applicants for the position.

Trustee Martin requested a Motion to move the meeting into executive session and it was stated that once the Motion was approved, the live stream of the meeting would end.

At 3:47 PM, **MOTION** made by Dr. Gloria Williams, seconded by Melissa Alvarado, to enter into executive session.

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

Melissa Alvarado	Yes	Lydia Martinez-Alvarez	Not yet 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
<b>Motion passed unanimously.</b>		Dr. Robert Martin	Yes

The meeting entered executive session at 3:47 PM and did not reconvene in open session.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Minutes of January 29, 2021