



BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Presidential Search Committee

April 22, 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, Stephen Taksar, Dr. Gloria Williams, and Jean Beal, secretary to the committee

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Lydia Martinez-Alvarez, Tom Simard, 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 3:02 PM and announced each of the meeting participants as listed above. He suggesting postponing the approval of the executive session of the March 23 minutes since they make reference to candidates who are not finalists. A final meeting will take place to discuss the process and approve the executive session minutes.

MOTION made by Dr. Gloria Williams, seconded by Thalita Neves, to approve the open session portion of the minutes of the March 23, 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	Not in meeting
Dr. Brian Jennings	Yes	Stephen Taksar	Yes
Ron'na J'Q Lytle	Yes	Dr. Gloria Williams	Yes
Motion passed unanimously.		Dr. Robert Martin	Yes

It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed, and, as a result will be captured as recorded.

Trustee Martin stated the Board of Trustees created the search committee to perform the preliminary work of the presidential search. An overview of the committee's work, which has followed the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) Guidelines (the Guidelines), was reviewed:

- Defined the desired qualities of a president, developed the leadership profile, assisted with identification, recruitment, and preliminary screening of candidates.
- In executive session, reviewed 68 applicants and narrowed the pool to 14 semifinalists, interviewing 13 by Zoom after one withdrawal.
- After three days of interviews, agreed to advance five individuals to finalist status and invited them to campus for interviews. The last candidate withdrew prior to the interviews.
- The committee's work is largely done with the recommendation of 3-5 unranked individuals to the Board of Trustees. The Guidelines permit that, given the investment made in the process, committee members could have the opportunity to develop a list of strengths and areas of growth for each candidate to pass on to the Board of Trustees. Although not required, it is important to both the committee chair and the Board chair to create that voice for the committee which has been involved since the beginning of the process.
- The BHE Guidelines and Open Meeting Law are clear that once finalists are identified, there is no longer an option of entering into executive session. The bulleted statement of strengths and areas of growth for each candidate will be given to the Board of Trustees, together with the candidates' application information, references, and survey feedback.

WittKieffer stated we have a very dynamic situation and have known that some candidates were engaged in other searches. They gave the following update after speaking with the candidates.

- The fifth candidate withdrew because he accepted a position elsewhere.
- A notice of withdrawal from the search was received from Dr. Esterberg for personal reasons.
- Dr. Somerville has accepted another position elsewhere.
- Drs. Kruger and Thompson are both enthusiastic and interested in continuing and likely to accept if offered the position. They are both sobered and excited about the possibility.
- There is a common set of concerns and reservations from all candidates. Each one observed that there is an enormous amount of work to be done to rebuild a culture of trust and collaboration and every constituent group is responsible for divergent tracks that we are now on. Every group needs to commit to working with the president; there is no one group that is absolved of the responsibility and no one group is responsible for the problems. The only group not seen as part of the divergence were the students. The future lies in the administration, faculty, staff, and boards refocusing, connecting, and creating a strategy to help students be successful. There appears to be no unifying strategy, and the first step would be to engage people in a reset exercise on culture and values and pull a strategy together.
- Robert Luke joined the meeting at 3:18 PM.
- Candidates also gave the following feedback on common threads of the University's strengths:
 - Programs are well positioned to take advantage of federal stimulus money;
 - Many possibilities leading the discussion on diversity, equity, and inclusion by building on the strengths of the Criminal Justice and Liberal Arts programs;
 - Partnership possibilities in the area across a whole range of backgrounds; and
 - Opportunity to work more collaboratively with other state universities and the University of Massachusetts to address inequities and create better pipelines.

WittKieffer continued that there has to be some conversation, particularly with the Board, about what it means to press this reset button culturally. How can the campus community talk with each other again?

The committee has done much work around this over the year. A new president cannot create a successful strategy if people are not talking and aligned around a common set of values. The committee will provide feedback on the two remaining candidates in the pool. By recommending five candidates to come to campus for interviews, the committee fulfilled the procedural requirements.

Comments from committee members:

- There is a lot of work to do on culture building and trust. As an institution we were very transparent on the work ahead and the rebuilding opportunity for anyone selected, but there are also many rewards. WittKieffer commented that there are divergent views on what that work is. Some had opposite points of view as to who is responsible for issues.
- Let's be excited on who we have and what they can do for us.
- The committee did a good job and presented the University well. The presidential profile reflected accurately what we heard and is how the community presented itself when candidates came to visit.
- We were doing candidates a service by being honest in telling them who we are and the issues we have. Not letting them know would be worse. We did a good job letting the groups speak for themselves.
- It was questioned whether executive session purpose #1 could be used for this meeting if talking about an individual's reputation. Trustee Martin confirmed with BHE counsel (Constantia Papanicolaou) and the Attorney General's (AG) Open Meeting Law Division (Sarah Monahan) that as a search committee, when engaged in preliminary screening, we had the benefit of going into executive session for purpose #8 because if not, candidates would be reluctant to apply. Those discussions are private until the stage they become a finalist. At that point, the search and their name becomes public. Once public, purpose #8 is clear that confidentiality no longer applies to the Board of Trustees nor the search committee acting on behalf of the Board of Trustees. When candidates met with the Board of Trustees, that was an open meeting, publically shared on YouTube. Purpose #1 for executive sessions includes discussion on reputation, and while it is awkward to discuss candidates' strengths and growth areas, the AG's office was clear that reputation typically refers to issues like physical or mental health, issues for which a person would be entitled to an element of privacy. There is a fine line between one's reputation and one's qualifications for a job. In a search, we are talking about their qualifications for a job. If we claimed purpose #1 to enter executive session, it requires that we give candidates 48-hours' notice and give them the opportunity to be present.

Discussion and recommendation of presidential candidates to the Board of Trustees. After creating a bulleted list for each candidate, it will be reviewed to confirm that each statement reflects the consensus of at least the majority of committee members. It will be helpful for the Board to hear how each candidate interacted with students, administrators, staff, faculty, alumni and foundation. References can be discussed, but refrain from identifying specific comments or referees.

Dr. Darrell P. Kruger

Strengths:

- Very strong emotional intelligence and well aware of leadership style, talking about positional power vs. reputational power
- Collaborative - not trying to lead from the top
- Good sense of balancing innovation with stability
- Strong in all areas listed in the presidential profile
- Honest about his background (South African Apartheid) and would use that perspective to

address racial and social injustices

- Very committed to understanding and respecting the culture but not beholden to it – looking at relationships in different ways
- Expertise in planning
- Building trust on campus through presentations showing transparency of how budgets allocated
- Sense of humor and self-reflective
- Comprehensive understanding of Higher Ed landscape to move institution forward
- Great understanding of the institution – he demonstrated he had done his research about WSU - and willingness to get in the weeds and understand each group, giving a lens of what is needed and how he could help
- Fair to everyone in making decisions in the best interest of the institution
- He sees himself as a member of WSU. Would hit the ground running
- Savvy enough to work well with all constituent groups to bring together
- Core values align with WSU, emphasizing teacher-scholar model and inclusive excellence. Spoke to challenges in Higher Ed over the next 5 years (climate, safety and security, enrollment/enrollment/enrollment, racial inequities, student well-being)
- Approach to people reflects values from the heart and from the head
- Strategic and innovative – looking differently at the Strategic Plan. Comments reflected investment in understanding UEAAC report
- Digital enhancements in delivering coursework
- Increased enrollment in his current position. Did homework on WSU's historical enrollment
- Good skills to turn difficult situations around, be sensitive to how change affects real people, and get support from those affected (e.g., program prioritization, budget and stipend reductions)
- Given significant responsibilities for fundraising by his Chancellor and demonstrated success
- Made connections over the use of Bolman & Deal's 4 frames of leadership (grow people, grow resources, how use resources: political, human resources, structural, symbolic) to bring institution together
- Staff received him well and would be willing to work with him
- Faculty would be excited to work with him
- High level people skills. Intellect and ability to focus on and connect with people he talked to. Extremely friendly and personable, introducing himself to every student he met in the hallway on tour. Easy to communicate with. Ability to listen and retain information.
- Asked many questions about students and the University
- Has completed a number of initiatives for equity and inclusion on campus
- A lifelong learner, well-read, breadth of knowledge
- Self-proclaimed data geek. Relies on data and uses it to inform decision making

Areas for Growth and Development:

- May need to increase ability to promote himself (although humbleness not necessarily a negative)
- Our role is to educate and help him with contextual areas in the northeast (politics, partnerships and relationships)
- Allow himself to be a little more relaxed with students, allowing meeting to be more of a conversation instead of structured and scheduled
- It may be a challenge understanding how we operate with limited funding and discretionary spending. Will need to adjust expectations with resources available compared to where he has been

- Question financial acumen. Budget being listed in reference as an area of development. Needs to have strategic understanding of Higher Ed finances on a level appropriate for president.

Dr. Linda Thompson

Strengths:

- Compelling personal story inspired and engaged members
- Open and honest with struggles of how she got to where she is today
- Personable and interactive
- Sense of investing in people so they can flourish in society (evidence of generating financial support for faculty development and research)
- Clear plan for what she would do first 100 days
- Excellent command of society forces affecting Higher Ed currently and in next 5 years (technology, economics and politics of Higher Ed, demographic challenges and new pathways, racial inequities)
- Approached problems at strategic level (e.g., students in residence halls) you would expect of president
- Understanding of programming support as it relates to enrollment
- Significant experience in government, grants, marketing (at federal, state, and local levels)
- Administered complex state and municipal agencies
- Very experienced working with unions in state and municipal work as well as at universities
- Capable of transformational leadership programs
- Experience with outcomes-based budgeting model
- Strong in outward facing duties with political power centers, local communities
- Comprehensive fundraising experience
- Willingness to shift how we partner with other universities to create a pathway for learning
- Out of the box thinking – looking to the future
- Promotes investing in people rather than the traditional type college entry standards – institutions should be inclusive not exclusive
- Utilize marketing firm to help with branding
- Very growth oriented with good energy in wanting to build
- Strong innovator and entrepreneurial – leverage to be more of a community and holistic partner in the area. Would use to strengthen enrollment and curriculum/program development
- Very deep thinker and thoughtful in responses
- Attention to detail to grasp issues
- Very forward thinking for WSU in the next 5-10-30 years. Already thinking of WSU's 200th Anniversary
- Listened very carefully to student concerns
- Asked pointed and probing questions
- Good pulse on students and the student experiences. Excited to create fun student events
- Strategic planning experience in all prior positions. Invited to assist in areas outside her own college.
- Very creative with using what we have and asking what Horace Mann 2.0 would look like
- Understanding surrounding communities and how they would fit into WSU
- Did homework to understand WSU and how she could assist in creating a distinction in the marketplace
- Good sense of humor
- Has a national recognition in nursing and focuses on health inequities

- Very effective in supporting faculty and creating opportunities for them to do their work
- Honesty in discussing her experience as an administrator in NC; spoke well of her character
- Small stature and quiet voice but possesses a lot of steel, fortitude, and strength

Areas for Growth and Development:

- Redirect growth expectation to what WSU and the state university system can do (normal for most candidates to be unfamiliar with state system). May need to adjust vision and expectations to what resources and environment will support.
- Reference states strength in strategic thinking and innovation. May need good staff around her and support in implementation
- Strong external focus in her dean history and experience. What perspectives may be needed in managing a complex organization like WSU? The president position is different than dean
- Did not answer question asked about finances in UEAAC. Referenced to CFO
- Although a strong financial acumen discussion was not seen during the interviews, there seems to be a depth of experience in financial matters, so believe there must be ability and skill (WittKieffer reported reference states that for budgeting and financial issues, has a far stronger skill set for president than deanship. Broad views, strategic questions of where resources will come from. Detailed operations are not a strength so she hires for that purpose)
- Tendency for every question's answer to drift back to health related topics. Concern of some faculty that she has the breadth to take care of institution as a whole. Not looking at liberal arts view
- Concern with not enough experience and making the jump into a presidency
- A provost and academic affairs background would give additional understanding of more disciplines (although she stated that she is excited to see our Criminal Justice program become a Commonwealth and national leader in community safety and health and talked a lot of about Horace Mann 2.0 and the liberal arts to prepare students to live in society)
- Would like to have seen a little more energy and enthusiasm

Recommendation for the new president:

- Look into training and/or Harvard Seminar for New Presidents:
(<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe/program/harvard-seminar-new-presidents>)
- Provide opportunity to partner with a current president in the system as a coach/mentor
- Create a presidential on ramping committee from across campus to help acclimate to the institution

Each member of the Board of Trustees will receive all candidate materials that have been accessible to the committee. The Massachusetts Commissioner of Higher Education will have the opportunity to share his impressions of the candidates, but will not recommend a specific candidate. The Board of Trustees have a special meeting scheduled for April 28 to vote on the next president. The search process has been constructive and the committee will meet one more time to get feedback from WittKieffer and discuss the search process. Trustee Martin thanked the campus community for their involvement in the process, saying the input was meaningful and has counted.

MOTION made by Dr. Brian Jennings, seconded by Melissa Alvarado, to adjourn.

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	Not in meeting
Dr. Brian Jennings	Yes	Stephen Taksar	Yes
Ron'na J'Q Lytle	Yes	Dr. Gloria Williams	Yes
Motion passed unanimously.		Dr. Robert Martin	Yes

Meeting adjourned at 5:42 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Open Session Minutes from March 23, 2021 meeting – Draft