

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY
Presidential Search Committee Minutes
Friday, February 23, 2024
8:00am
Presidents' Hall
Guglielmi Mazzaferro Center

Committee Members Present: Lindsay Carpenter Connors, Mario Delci, Jennifer Flanagan, Eric Gregoire, Meg Hoey, Carolyn Hughes, Kelli Lundgren, Jessica Murdoch (ex-officio), Adriana Padilla Salgado, Deborah Phillips, Elise Takehana, David Tiernan, Richard Toomey, Allison Turner

Absent: Jonathan Thompson

Others Present: Matthew Bruun, Greg Duyck (WittKieffer), Nathan Robichaud

Call to order

Chair of the Presidential Search Committee, Eric Gregoire called the meeting to order at 8:04am and opened the meeting to public comments. There were none.

Approve minutes from the January 22, 2024 meeting – VOTE 05PSC-23/24

J. Flanagan made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 22, 2024 search committee meeting. A. Turner seconded the motion.

The Committee voted to approve the motion.

Roll Call

M. Delci	yes
J. Flanagan	yes
J. Thompson	absent
C. Hughes	yes
L. Carpenter Connors	yes
E. Takehana	yes
M. Hoey	yes
R. Toomey	yes
D. Phillips	yes
A. Padilla Salgado	yes
A. Turner	yes
E. Gregoire	yes
D. Tiernan	yes

Recruitment overview and next steps

G. Duyck provided an update to the applicant pool in Workzone. WittKieffer reached out to approximately 4000 individuals across the country and they specifically targeted 1300 additional individuals. Currently there are 78 total applicants and there are an additional 30 conversations in process. It is anticipated additional applications will be received. The diversity of the pool is strong with 1/3 of the candidates being women and 46% candidates of color.

Committee poll

The committee poll closes at 5pm on Wednesday, February 28 and WittKieffer will work with Eric, Jess and Kelli to get the results to committee members before the March 1 meeting. Committee members should select up to 8 candidates that they would like to consider for interviews. The poll is not a formal vote but rather it will shape the conversation for deciding which candidates should be interviewed.

Review and finalize first round interview questions

Trustee Gregoire suggested the committee utilize the seven categories that WittKieffer outlined and choose 1-2 questions from each category. The committee agreed the categories were sufficient. The committee was reminded that the targeted number of questions for the first-round interviews should be 10-11.

The committee noted that fiscal management was not a focused topic but agreed that it was important to enhance the questions to bring it to light. Along with fiscal management, capital projects should also be incorporated into the questions. It was determined that questions 1 and 41 were similar and perhaps some word smithing could combine them into one opening question. The committee wants to hear what the candidate sees in us/why Fitchburg State?

It was mentioned that the committee also reflect on the “must haves” and “should haves” in the profile. The successful candidate should have communication skills and be intellectual and empathetic which isn’t reflected in the categories.

General Leadership

Many of the questions had similarities and after some discussion, it was decided that question number 2 is broad enough so the candidates have the opportunity focus on their experiences and stories. It was also agreed to follow up with a question that combines some attributes of questions 2, 7, 5 and 9.

Resources

There was a lengthy discussion regarding a number of these questions and whether they are too specific in nature and if they should be more general in nature. The committee doesn’t want to send a message that we work in silos or give the impression that there are issues that we are asking them to solve. By asking a more generalized question, the candidate will have the opportunity to tell us how things could be different and possibly speak to things that the committee didn’t think of. It was decided to soften the language from questions 12 and 14 and

focus on how the candidate works with campus constituents and how they may deal with difficult situations.

Academic Planning and Enrollment

Again, the committee discussed the specificity of these questions. Greg mentioned that if you ask questions that are too specific, the candidate will give very political answers. They won't be prepared and it would be difficult for them to make recommendations. The committee did think there needed to be some focus on modalities (day, GCE and continuing education) as we have a very strong evening program that isn't reflected in the questions. Questions should focus on academic vision and emerging trends.

Diversity and Inclusion

The committee decided that questions 19 and 22 could be combined and re-worded so the candidates have the opportunity to explain how they have enhanced diversity in their institutions and how they prioritize and implement a plan. Something that provokes a strategy. Additionally, the committee agreed that the last sentence of questions 22, "How would you unite this campus?" needs to be reworded as it insinuates that we have a problem.

Faculty and Staff

Questions 24 and 25 have a negative tone. However, the committee would like to rephrase and focus on how the candidates get through difficult situations. It was suggested to change the wording from burn out to professional fatigue and frame it as; "collectively our country suffers from professional fatigue. How would you foster and improve"? It was decided to ask question 26 and have a follow up such as "How do you rejuvenate the passion after professional fatigue?"

Students

Question number 28 is similar to question 18 (in category Academic Planning and Enrollment). Perhaps roll #28 into #18 and then ask a separate student question. The committee liked the general composure of question 27 but agreed the committee should consider adding "How do you directly engage with students?" Students would like to see a personable, approachable president. The committee also questions 28 & 31- as they touch on "What do you think" and then "what will you do."

External Engagement

There are three components, donors, community and funding. The committee thought there should be two questions; one around funding and donors and the other on community. It was suggested ask question number 34 as it is less specific leaving the candidates to answer thoughtfully. There was also discussion of asking question 36 and perhaps add follow up question.

Trustee Gregoire informed the committee that we had reached the end of the meeting and would resume the conversation and finalize questions at our next meeting on March 5, 2023. It was noted that the candidates will also have the opportunity to ask questions and we would need to

factor that time into interviews. It was also mentioned that the "A" category of candidates seemed to lack diversity and that the committee should also review category "B". Again, WittKieffer advised that candidates were put into categories based on our criteria in the profile. However, if there are candidates that are in other categories that committee members thought should be moved, they should contact WittKieffer and they would be happy to move candidates as requested. Jessica Murdoch reminded the committee about the Affirmative Action policy and advised that diversity should not be the only criteria when moving candidates.

An updated list of questions with the changes discussed will be compiled and sent out to the committee for review before the March 5 meeting.

Trustee Gregoire asked if there were any additional questions or comments. There were none.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn by A. Turner and seconded by D. Phillips.

Roll Call

M. Delci	yes
J. Flanagan	yes
J. Thompson	absent
C. Hughes	yes
L. Carpenter Connors	yes
E. Takehana	yes
M. Hoey	yes
R. Toomey	yes
D. Phillips	yes
A. Padilla Salgado	yes
A. Turner	yes
E. Gregoire	yes
D. Tiernan	yes

With no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 9:25am.

Respectfully Submitted,



Eric A. Gregoire, Chairman of the Presidential
Search Committee
Board of Trustees