

The State University of New York

Guide to Presidential Searches at State-Operated Institutions

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Guidelines for the Selection of a President When a Vacancy Occurs at a State-operated Campus of the State University of New York

I. Legal Authority for Nomination and for Appointment

The legal authority to appoint the president or chief administrative officer of a State-operated institution of the State University is vested in the University Board of Trustees by Section 355(2)(g) of the Education Law. The council of each such institution is given responsibility for recommending a candidate or candidates to the Board by Section 356(3)(a). (Section 6004 (c) gives this same power to the Trustees of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry.) The Board of Trustees may also appoint a president or chief administrative officer in the event that no council recommendation is made, or where a council recommendation fails to comply with the Trustees' standards and procedures.

II. Introduction

The State University of New York Board of Trustees considers the selection of campus presidents to be one of the most important of its duties. The procedures below are intended to assist the councils of State-operated campuses in the search for, and nomination of, individuals to fill the position of president. It should be noted that the term "council" in the following is intended to refer equally to the Board of Trustees of the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

This document is intended to provide a set of guidelines that should be utilized to conduct presidential searches. Recognizing the great diversity of size, scope and mission of the campuses in the SUNY system, the specific search process at an individual campus may be modified as deemed appropriate by the Chancellor in consultation with the campus council chair.

III. Campus Presidential Search

A. Preliminary Steps in the Search Process

- As soon as practical after it is known that a presidential vacancy will occur, the Chancellor (or the Chancellor's representative) shall reach out to the council chair to provide advice and instructions in planning the search and the criteria to be used in the selection of a new president. The Council chair should consult with campus constituency groups regarding the search plans.
- Unless otherwise agreed upon in advance by the Chancellor and the council chair, the search committee shall consist of four members of the council (including the chair), six members of the full time teaching faculty of the campus, one student, one alumni representative, one campus-related foundation representative, one academic dean, one professional or support staff member and one incumbent or retired SUNY president from another campus or a member of

the Chancellor's senior staff designated by the Chancellor. In the case of campuses larger than 10,000 FTE, the Council chair may choose, after discussion with and authorization by the Chancellor or the Chancellor's representative, to increase the size of the search committee to include an additional member of the teaching faculty, a graduate student and an additional representative from the campus foundation board.

- The council chair shall appoint a chair of the search committee. Generally, the council chair also serves as the chair of the search committee. If the council chair is unwilling or unable to serve as chair of the search committee, the council chair shall appoint another member of the council to serve as chair of the search committee.
- Taking care to assure that faculty representation on the search committee speaks for a broad spectrum of faculty opinion, the campus faculty governance group will work with the Chancellor's representative to devise a nomination and election process to select the faculty representatives to the search committee by secret ballot. The voting process must be widely publicized with sufficient notice to allow any interested faculty to participate in the nomination and voting process. The council chair shall invite the appropriate campus and community groups to submit recommendations for all other positions on the search committee, and shall make the appointments to the remaining positions on the search committee from the recommendations submitted. The committee itself should represent a broad diversity of opinion among the primary campus constituencies.
- The Chancellor shall designate a liaison representative to serve as a nonvoting member of the search committee. That representative shall have full access to the files of the committee, and shall be responsible for reporting at regular intervals to the Chancellor and the Trustees regarding the progress of the search and the work of the search committee. The representative shall provide general assistance to the search committee as needed for each step in the process.
- The council chair and the Chancellor, or the Chancellor's representative, shall agree on an expected timetable for the search and nomination process.
- The Chancellor's office shall provide a list of nationally recognized organizations with established expertise in academic recruitment and screening from which the council shall select one to assist in their search.

- A campus staff liaison shall be appointed to assist the search committee and to coordinate the clerical work of the committee. A budget for the search should be determined in conjunction with the chief financial officer of the campus and arrangements made for a search office and support staff. The campus is responsible for the full cost of the presidential search and the budget should be sufficient to cover the cost of hiring a professional search consultant, advertising the position, travel of candidates to interviews as well as the usual telephone, postage and duplicating expenses associated with a search.

B. The Search Process

- At the first search committee meeting, the search chair, along with the Chancellor's representative, shall acquaint the committee members with the search procedures in general and with any specific instructions from the council, the Chancellor, and the Trustees. The search committee shall be advised that the council is required to send a list of no fewer than three names of acceptable candidates to the Chancellor for consideration, and that the council may submit its opinion on the relative strengths and weaknesses of each candidate whose name is forwarded for consideration by the Chancellor. The timetable for the search shall be presented to the committee members and a commitment obtained from each member to attend all meetings and all interviews.
- At the first search committee meeting the importance of confidentiality shall be discussed. All members of the committee must agree to preserve the confidentiality of the search and the names of all candidates. If any time throughout the search, there is evidence that a member of the committee has breached the confidentiality of the search, that member may be dismissed from the committee by a majority vote of the committee. The decision of whether or not to replace the dismissed member will be in the sole discretion of the committee.
- In consultation with the Chancellor's representative and the search consultant, the committee should assess the needs of the institution and the type and style of leadership desired in a new president. Combining the results of this assessment and the required criteria set forth by the Chancellor, the search committee shall develop, and submit to the Chancellor (or the Chancellor's representative) for approval, the material to be used in the advertisement of the vacancy and the recruitment of candidates for the position.
- The vacancy shall be advertised nationally. The search consultant shall assist the search committee in recruiting and evaluating candidates.

- The members of the search committee shall review all applications and nominations for the position. Letters should be sent to those who do not meet the minimum qualifications for the position as soon as practical.
- From the remaining pool of candidates, the committee shall select a group of approximately 20 names whom they judge to be the strongest applicants. Additional information may be collected on this group by the search consultant and committee members. Additional information may include reference checking (but only from references named by the candidate in order to preserve the candidate's confidentiality), and appropriate internet searches.
- When additional information is collected and reference checking, if done, has been completed, the committee shall meet to review the applications of all candidates and to discuss the additional information obtained. The committee will then select a group of approximately 8-12 candidates to be interviewed at a site convenient to the committee and to the candidates. The site selected for the interviews must be designed to assure that the confidentiality of the names of the candidates to be interviewed will be maintained. Prior to the interviews, the search consultant will conduct a thorough review of each candidate's credentials and check references supplied by each candidate, and provide the search committee with the results of that review.
- All members of the search committee should attend the personal interviews. The Chancellor's representative will also attend these interviews. Each interview will typically last at least one hour, using a list of questions to be asked of all candidates. Time should also be allotted during this interview to allow each candidate to ask questions of the committee.
- Following these interviews, the committee should meet to discuss and review the qualifications of the candidates interviewed and to select a small group of three to five candidates as semi-finalists. At this point, most searches will proceed with publicly announced campus visits by semi-finalists. Other searches, as described below, may proceed as a representational search. Where appropriate during campus visits, the candidate's spouse, or other family members or associates, may also be invited to visit the campus. At this stage, candidates will be asked to allow the search committee to check references, other than those names provided by the candidates. Candidates other than the semi-finalists should be notified prior to the release to the public of the names of candidates to be invited to the campus.

- Up to this point in the search process, the names of the candidates have been kept confidential by the committee. When the semi-finalists are scheduled to visit campus, their names are released to the public, along with general information about their background and qualifications. Their names and curriculum vitae shall also be forwarded to the SUNY Board of Trustees at this stage, although the Trustees and the Chancellor may - in confidence - request access to search committee documents, including candidates' curriculum vitae, at any point in the process. However, all information regarding the reference checks, committee discussion and voting on the various applicants is still confidential and may not be divulged at any time.
- Campus visits shall be designed to allow a large number of campus and community members to meet and hear from each candidate. In planning these visits, the committee should remember that at this stage of the process they are recruiting the candidates as well as evaluating them.
- All members of the council should actively participate in the interviews of the semi-finalist candidates who visit the campus.
- The Chancellor shall be given an opportunity to meet with and interview candidates, either at the first interview stage or at the semi-finalist campus visit stage. The timing of such interviews shall be at the discretion of the Chancellor. The Chancellor may, at this time, also require that the candidates be interviewed by the Provost or other members of the Chancellor's senior staff.
- When deemed necessary by the Chancellor and the State University Board of Trustees, or when initiated by the council chair and agreed upon by the Chancellor and State University Board of Trustees, the search will be deemed a representational search where the search committee will be the representatives of the campus in lieu of campus visits and where the semi-finalists' names are not publicized to the community. The sole criterion upon which this decision rests is a determination as to whether a traditional search process with public campus meetings would inhibit the generation of a suitable pool of excellent candidates. During a representational search, members of the college council and other designated members of the college community will be invited to meet with the semi-finalist candidates under strict rules of confidentiality. The decision whether to hold campus visits will be discussed with the college council and search committee but it is in the sole discretion of the Chancellor and Board of Trustees of the State University of New York.

- Prior to any final vote by the search committee or the council, the members of the State University Board of Trustees shall also be given an opportunity to meet with and interview all finalists.

C. The Selection Process

- The search committee shall meet and deliberate on the merits of each candidate who visited the campus. It is recommended that all council members be invited to join the search committee at this meeting to hear the search committee's discussions regarding the relative merits of each candidate. The search committee is strongly urged to forward as many acceptable names as possible to the council for consideration.
- The search committee shall forward to the council the list of all acceptable candidates, along with a short (one page) synopsis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each candidate.
- The council then shall meet and deliberate on the relative merits of each of the candidates whose names have been forwarded to them by the search committee. While the recommendation of candidates to the Chancellor and the State University Board of Trustees is the prerogative of the council alone, consensus between the council and the search committee should be sought and encouraged. Serious disagreement about the final candidates recommended by the council, particularly any disagreement that clearly follows major constituency lines, suggests a potentially serious problem with the search process.
- The council shall recommend three acceptable finalist candidates to the Chancellor for consideration. The council may submit its opinion in written form on the relative strengths and weaknesses of each finalist candidate whose name is forwarded for consideration by the Chancellor.

D. Board of Trustees Approval

- The Chancellor, in compliance with statute, shall provide to the Board of Trustees a copy of the recommendations made by the College Council and background material on each candidate. The Chancellor shall then recommend a candidate to the Board of Trustees for its consideration.
- The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees plus any additional interested members of the Board of Trustees will interview the candidate recommended by the Chancellor at a time and place arranged by the Secretary

of the Board of Trustees. Prior to this meeting with the candidate, the Chancellor will provide to the Board of Trustees a proposed annual compensation package with background compensation data. After its deliberations, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees will forward its recommendations on both the candidate and the compensation package to the full Board of Trustees.

- A recommended candidate approved by the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees will be invited to attend the next scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will meet with the candidate in executive session before a final presentation and vote.

E. Reopened Searches

Should the Chancellor or the Board of Trustees decide that the circumstances warrant the reopening of a search, it is within their discretion to require that the council chair appoint, in accordance with these guidelines, a new search committee.

F. Internal Candidates

Should anyone from within the campus community wish to apply for the presidency, that individual must do so by way of a formal application prior to the closing date for the receipt of nominations. Any such internal candidate who does not formally apply for the position and participate in the entire search process will not be considered for the position. Interim or Acting Presidents may not be candidates for the presidency unless they have received the written permission of the Chancellor to participate as candidates.

IV. Approval

The guidelines were approved by the State University of New York Board of Trustees effective January 25, 2012.