

MINUTES
Board of Trustees Illinois State University
Presidential Search Committee Meeting
December 11, 2023

Committee members present: Danielle Beasley, Trustee Chair Kathryn Bohn, Angela Bonnell, Janice Bonneville, Leanna Bordner, Dr. Heather Dillaway, Ash Ebikhumi, Taylor Flinn, Tim Griffin, Dr. Martha Horst, Dan Kelley, Justin Lawson, Joe McDonald, Dr. Danielle Miller-Schuster, Eduardo Monk, Jr., Trustee Bob Navarro, Dr. Nancy Novotny, Dr. Derek O'Connell, Dr. Bahae Samhan, Dr. Julie Webber, Jill Wilberg, Dr. Ani Yazedjian

Committee members present virtually: Trustee Jones, Trustee Tillis, Dr. Vijay Devabhaktuni, Dr. Erin Mikulec, and Dr. Klaus Schmidt

Committee members absent: Archana Shekara and Trustee Scott Jenkins

Staff present: Jean Ann Dargatz, Katy Killian, Ryan Kraft, Meghan Lugo, Lisa Mason and Carrie Haas, Counsel.

Chair Kathryn Bohn called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

Chair Bohn noted for the record that notice of the meeting had been posted in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act. She also noted that anyone participating virtually in the meeting must state their reason for not being physically present. Accepted reasons are personal illness or disability; employment purposes or the business of the public body; a family or other emergency or unexpected childcare obligations.

Trustee Navarro took roll call. After confirming there was an in-person quorum, he took roll call for members Tillis, Devabhaktuni, Mikulec and Schmidt who requested to attend and participate remotely. Trustee Tillis and Dr. Mikulec both indicated that "employment reasons" prevented their in-person attendance. Dr. Devabhaktuni indicated that he was prevented from attending in person due to personal illness and Dr. Schmidt indicated that he was prevented from attending in person due to a family emergency.

A motion to allow Trustee Tillis, Vijay Devabhaktuni, Erin Mikulec and Klaus Schmidt to participate remotely was made by Trustee Ebikhumi and seconded by Tim Griffin. All members attending in-person voted in favor of allowing each to participate remotely for the noted reasons. The motion was approved and the individuals were allowed to participate remotely.

Chair Bohn asked for a motion and second to approve the meeting agenda. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Trustee Ebikhumi and seconded by Dan Kelley. All members attending voted in favor. The agenda was approved.

Chair Bohn next asked for a motion and second to approve the meeting minutes from November 28, 2023. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Trustee Ebikhumi and seconded by Leanna Bordner. All members attending voted in favor. The meeting minutes from November 28, 2023 were approved.

Trustee Bohn called for public comments of which there were none.

Trustee Bohn welcomed the search committee, introduced Parker Executive Search and invited them to update the committee on several items.

Representatives from Parker Executive Search, Laurie Wilder and Porsha Williams led discussion on Candidate Identification and Recruitment Efforts. Ms. Wilder discussed the number of current applicants with 15 having submitted materials for consideration; 18 other individuals are considering the position and 20 additional individuals have calls scheduled with Parker in the next two weeks. Ms. Wilder stated that she is excited about those considering the opportunity and these numbers are what would be expected at this time in the search process. Candidate background disciplines range - some candidates are sitting presidents from peer or smaller institutions

that look at ISU to be aspirational. Some candidates will be nervous about the public exposure as someone sitting in a presidency is tasked with raising money and building relationships and the risk can be great for them.

Trustee Jones appeared remotely and requested to attend the meeting for employment reasons. Chair Bohn called for a motion and second to allow Trustee Jones to participate remotely. A motion to allow Trustee Jones to participate remotely was made by Trustee Ebikhumi and seconded by Tim Griffin. All members attending in person voted in favor of allowing Trustee Jones to participate remotely for the noted reason. The motion was approved and Trustee Jones was allowed to participate by video conference.

Ms. Wilder continued the candidate discussion. Some candidates may be provosts from R2 institutions. There will also be a number of individuals from other parts of administration such as vice presidents of student affairs and deans of professional schools. The pool is diverse in experience, geography, and positions held.

Ms. Wilder stated that candidates have been impressed with the university's DEI efforts. The position is attractive to potential candidates and the "churn" is happening in the marketplace as more know about the opportunity. Wilder feels good about the quality of the candidates, but would like to see the quantity increase. However, she reminded the Committee that while quantity is great; quality is the most important piece. The ad deadline is January 10th and many of these candidates will wait until the last moment to submit because confidentiality is of utmost concern to them. To date, the numbers are standard and the profiles are what we expect to see.

Wilder stated there has only been 1 nomination from the University community via the ISU nomination link. Ms. Williams clarified there have been multiple nominations from the ISU link but that all had submitted the same name for nomination. Wilder encouraged the committee to engage in nominations.

Ms. Wilder asked if there were any questions on candidates and profiles. There were none. Wilder next discussed General Market Feedback. At the last meeting Parker discussed the positive things being heard – size, scope, strategic plan, and positive trajectory. Items of concern that have arisen are that the creation of a strategic plan is already underway leaving prospective candidates to wonder if they will have meaningful involvement in the plan.

Another area of concern noted by Parker is the issue of strong internal candidates. Potential candidates may believe that an internal candidate is likely to get the position which can impact the application process. Ms. Wilder acknowledged that many internal candidates are selected for the position, especially since COVID, but reminds candidates that it is an open and competitive search. Concerns over state funding have been raised.

Ms. Wilder feels strongly that a good candidate pool is developing, we are hitting the right markets. Parker regularly analyzes their strategy and connects with thought leaders around the nation gathering recommendations. Wilder stated there are concerns with the overall current turmoil in higher education which causes potential candidates to hunker down in their current positions. Wilder asked for any questions from the Committee.

Tim Griffin asked about the change in culture where ISU's presidents tended to have long tenures in the position, but in recent years that trend has changed. Ms. Williams responded emphasizing that a shorter tenure for university presidents and other leadership positions in higher education is a national trend, not specific to ISU, as the job of a university president has become more complicated and difficult. Ms. Wilder indicated that the position has many challenges, and it is significantly harder than it's ever been as a university president due to increased responsibilities and other dynamics present across the nation including navigating a difficult social media environment and the inability to please all constituencies. Ms. Williams stressed the number 1 relationship for a university president is the relationship with the Board.

Dr. Klaus Schmidt asked how competition with other universities is impacting the application process. Ms. Wilder stated that every university can only hire one president at a time and there is competition all around although our timing is good. She reminded the Committee that the individual just has to be the right person for the job. Ms. Williams indicated that candidates are asked about timing conflicts with any other searches.

Dr. Devabhaktuni inquired about the complex situations university presidents are asked to handle and noted that deans typically do not interact much outside their college. Ms. Wilder responded that deans are becoming more attractive candidates because many dean positions are external with reference to deans of professional schools. Ms. Williams discussed tenures of candidates. Provost tenures may be shorter than that of a president – sometimes 1-2 years. As search consultants, Parker looks at tenure but also delve deeper. Ms. Wilder noted that it used to be that candidates with less than 5 years in a position were not considered, but now candidates with less than 3 years are considered. At the end of the day, we want to bring in someone who will do a good job and stay for 5-7 years, and then if people try to recruit your president, you can feel good about that and hope they stay because they enjoy the job and institution.

Ms. Williams next discussed the candidate review process. She acknowledged this to be the final meeting before the committee receives the candidate materials on 1/15. Parker will continue recruitment efforts until then. On 1/15, committee members will receive a detailed email message on how to access candidate materials via a secure link provided by Parker. including letters of interest, CVs, and references for each candidate. The Parker site will have secure log-in protocols and candidate info will not be printable or downloadable to ensure confidentiality. Committee members will have access to a rubric to assess and evaluate candidates; this rubric will be based on the qualifications and qualities listed in the job description. After members complete the evaluation tool, candidates will be placed in 3 categories to facilitate the discussion that will take place in closed session on 1/25. Between 1/15 and 1/25, if a committee member has a question about a candidate, they should reach out to Parker by telephone. Ms. Wilder stated as part of the process Parker will be conducting media reviews on candidates to locate any negative information that may be in the public domain. They will inform the committee of any areas of concern for any candidate.

It is Parker's expectation that all committee members will complete the evaluation for the candidates in advance of the 1/25 meeting at which time facilitated discussion will be had on "consensus" candidates vs. "on the bubble" candidates and the list will be narrowed down to 10-12 candidates for zoom interviews. Soon after that, Parker will schedule those candidates for the initial zoom interviews on February 5 and 6. Parker will work with Chair Bohn and representatives from Human Resources to develop interview questions.

Dan Kelley asked how the interviews are to be conducted in light of the fact there are 29 members and only 10-12 questions. He stressed the need for consistency in the questions asked to candidates and how they are asked of the candidates. Ms. Williams reminded the Committee that it is critical to ask the right questions and stated the same exact questions will be asked of each candidate and the questions will be assigned in advance. She stated we are looking at two long days on the 5th and 6th; and we will hold the 7th in case additional time is needed. Chair Bohn suggested the Committee reserve time at the end of the day on February 6th for discussion of candidates post interviews.

Ms. Wilder agreed and said this will not take nearly as much time as you might think as you will have a sense of direction at that point in the process. She also stated if the Committee interviews 11 candidates, we could do 6 on the first day leaving 5 for the second day. Member Bordner stated discussion could be held after 5 PM. Dan Kelley asked how much time is allotted for each interview. Ms. Williams responded that each interview should take 75 minutes leaving time for candidate questions. Trustee Navarro asked Parker about the format for the zoom interviews. Discussion was had on that topic and Dr. Devabhaktuni indicated that each member could be in the room and bring a laptop. Chair Bohn reminded the Committee of its requirement to adhere to the Open Meetings Act.

Ms. Wilder stated the Committee will need to allow sufficient time from about 8:30 to 6:30 on February 5 and 6 for the interviews. At the conclusion of these days, we hope to have 4-5 candidates coming to campus beginning February 19th over a two-week time frame. This is when the public phase of the search begins. Each candidate will have two days on campus meeting with constituency groups. After March 5, the expectation is that the Board will have all the information necessary to make its decision.

Once again, Ms. Wilder encouraged the committee to reach out for nominations – on campus, internationally, and via athletics contacts using the nomination link. She said it helps to say "you were nominated" as they reach out to

potential candidates. She also stated all constituencies represented impact the search and its nominations. With the update complete, she reminded the Committee to reach out to Parker via telephone with any questions or concerns.

Dr. Yazedjian asked if every meeting is an open meeting during the search. Board Counsel stated the interview process will be confidential under the applicable OMA exception with the Committee beginning the meeting in open session and then a vote being taken for purposes of going into closed session.

Chair Bohn thanked the committee and Parker Executive Search for their work. She stated the next meeting date will be January 25th at 8 a.m. in the Old Main Room of the Bone Student Center. Questions should be directed to bot@ilstu.edu.

Chair Bohn asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Ebikhumi motioned with Dan Kelley seconding the motion; all in favor, meeting was adjourned at 3:08 p.m.