

Resolution

Searching for and Hiring the President of the University (and other Senior Academic Administrators)

Background

The critical role of the faculty in the very existence of the university has been recognized from the earliest days of higher education in America. Notwithstanding recent changes, such as the large increase in the number of non-tenure track faculty and the major expansion of university administrations, the need for all faculty to function in this critical role has not changed.

For more than 100 years, the AAUP has been the professional organization representing and defining the role of the faculty. Almost 40 years ago, the AAUP adopted a revision and reaffirmation of an earlier statement on “Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Administrators” (<https://www.aaup.org/issues/governance-colleges-universities/presidential-search>). This statement strongly asserts the expectation that “faculty members will have a significant role in the selection of academic administrators, including the president...” While recognizing that both the faculty and the governing board have a primary responsibility in the search for a President, the AAUP statement indicates that other constituencies such as students and alumni also have a role.

Based on these principles, the AAUP statement also offers some procedural guidance on constituting a search committee for a president.

Of special importance to the faculty is the principle that “[e]ach major group should elect its own members to serve on the [search] committee...”

In addition, the statement provides the following guidelines, quoted here, about search committees:

The precise number [of faculty] is dependent on the size of the committee but should reflect the primacy of faculty concern in determining presidential leadership. The involvement of administrators on the search committee is problematic and should be discouraged since they may represent the perspective of the outgoing administration.

It is important to interview the potential search firms, preferably those staff members who would be assigned to the presidential search, to determine if the match is appropriate to the institutional characteristics and needs.

The search committee should spend some time defining the present condition of the college or university, determining what problems must be faced, what priorities the institution has, and what direction it must take to meet its challenges and opportunities.

It is important for the campus community to know the procedures that the committee will use in the search process, and these should be made public early in the search. It is the

responsibility of the search committee to keep constituent groups informed of the progress of the search. The approach to implementing confidentiality and the process and guidelines for campus visits are matters to be resolved early on in the search process.

In a talk at Rutgers during the spring term of 2016, the late William G. Bowen, former president of Princeton University and a leader in higher education spoke about the role of the faculty in presidential searches:

[S]trong faculty involvement is today a *sine qua non*, as it was not in early days. Faculty are likely to have a keen sense of what an institution needs most in a new leader; they will be able to discern whether particular candidates have the requisite sensitivities to lead an academic enterprise; and, finally, faculty can be extremely helpful in persuading the right candidate to accept a genuinely tough job.

Resolved

The NBFC calls on the Board of Governors to carry out the next presidential search and other searches for senior academic administrators following the principles and procedures enunciated in the AAUP 1981 statement on “Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Administrators.”

Especially important are the principles that the faculty should play a primary role in searches and that the faculty members who participate as members of search committees should be selected by the faculty, usually by representative faculty bodies.

If adopted, this resolution shall not be shared with news media until after the Board of Governors receives it.

21 April 2017