

**BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Presidential Search Community Session
October 30, 2019
MINUTES**

PRESENT: Co-Chairs Shannon Davis and Jimmy Hazel

NOTE: There were 96 people in attendance and 34 people joined by Webex.

I. Call to Order

Co-Chair Hazel called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

II. Opening Comments

Co-Chair Hazel introduced himself, noting his various roles at Mason over the years including his participation in the past two presidential searches. He thanked those in attendance. Co-Chair Davis introduced herself and noted her various roles at Mason, including Chair of the Faculty Senate. She provided comments to frame the conversation noting that the session was an opportunity to hear from the community members. She referred to two items distributed as the attendees entered the room, a bullet point list of minimum qualifications for the next president taken from the position description (Attachment 1) and a blank index card. Co-Chair Davis explained the Search Committee's process for developing the position description that included input from five Listening Sessions with the Mason community. She asked the audience to share their thoughts on the evidence and experiences they would like to see in the next president to help the Search Committee identify those attributes in the potential candidates. Co-Chair Hazel outlined the composition of the Search Committee and he recognized the Committee members in attendance. He provided the steps that had been accomplished after being advised that Dr. Cabrera would be leaving Mason and reiterated the session was to learn more about what the community would like to see in the next president. Co-Chair Davis explained that the index cards were for attendees to write questions, suggestions, and comments about the search and remain anonymous. She said the cards would be collected at 4:00 p.m. Co-Chair Davis explained that the session was being recorded, close-captioned, and would be added to the Presidential Search website. Co-Chair Hazel provided guidance for speakers, noting each speaker would initially be given 3 minutes to allow all interested attendees to speak and asked speakers to identify themselves when they receive the microphone to speak.

III. Comments from the Mason Community

Co-Chair Hazel opened the floor for comments. A number of faculty members, some of whom were also members of Mason's chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), expressed the need for an open, transparent search and the opportunity to meet with the final candidates in accordance with the Faculty Handbook.

Additional comments from the faculty included: the need to have a president who would want to come to a public forum to meet the faculty, staff and students to understand the concerns of those constituencies; citing research about open versus confidential searches; concern about a new president facing faculty resentment and suspicion based on the process; the impact of people who feel vulnerable in their current positions of leadership, primarily under-represented minorities and women, who may not apply if the search is not confidential; concern about finding a process to preserve confidentiality while still giving the faculty access to the finalists; keeping the search confidential until the finalists have been identified and then having an open forum for the stakeholders to ask questions and engage with the candidates; and the need for the next president to be the kind of person who is willing to participate in an open forum with the faculty in accordance with the Faculty Handbook.

Co-Chair Davis thanked the speakers for their comments and encouraged conversation and more suggestions around qualities and qualifications of the next president.

Student comments included the need for the search process to reflect the qualification of “a work ethic that prioritizes shared governance, integrity and transparency” as listed on Attachment 1.

Additional comments from the audience included: the need for a president who can lead Mason into the future of the changing of higher education including online, adult and transitional students.

Co-Chair Davis asked for the index cards to be collected and shared a comment from a Webex participant regarding having a president who can demonstrate serving our distributed campus, including students in Korea.

Additional comments from the audience included: the need to have a president who can make smart decisions and focus on best practices when addressing the need for growth and student needs; the need to have a president who commits to total transparency by addressing undue donor influence and is willing to meet with the faculty and students.

Co-Chair Davis shared another comment from a Webex participant regarding Mason’s concerns and needs being heard in Richmond with the Legislature, noting Mason is the largest university in Virginia and deserves more state funding.

Additional comments from the students included: student accessibility to open forums to meet the finalists, noting a timing that would work for both faculty and students; concern about there being only one student representative on the Search Committee; and concern about the George Mason University Foundation having representation on the Search Committee.

Additional comments from the faculty included: the need to have a president that has knowledge and an investment in undergraduate teaching; the lack of contingent faculty representation on the Search Committee; the benefits of having an open forum for the finalists to meet the faculty or having a representative group of faculty members meet with the finalists in a confidential setting.

Co-Chair Davis shared another comment from a Webex participant regarding the need for someone with teaching experience who understands the undergraduate serving nature of the faculty and the mission of the university.

Additional comments from the audience included: the need for a president to have experience leading a higher education institution, not just a graduate school; someone who is committed to building community and addresses the divisions and unhappiness of faculty and staff at the university; someone who treats students with respect and listens to their concerns; someone who appreciates, understands and supports the importance of the arts in a Research 1 university; someone who has experience with the arts, understands research in the arts, and has experience in building facilities for the arts; someone who has experience in accessibility research to address the issues of disabled students caused by the construction on campus; the need for the graduate student population to be represented on the Search Committee; someone who is able to be a bright voice for the university, well-spoken, willing to listen to the students and faculty, and willing to explain that sometimes things at the university are private and need to remain that way; a president who will make the campus a safe place in terms of sexual assault and follows through when hiring staff and faculty; a commitment to increased staffing in Mason's Title IX department and in the mental health services; someone who has experience in diversity planning and commitment to staff diversity, noting the lack of diversity in the Office of Student Involvement.

Co-Chair Davis shared an additional comment from a Webex participant regarding the hope that the next president values the libraries as a resource and learning space.

Additional comments from the audience included: the need for a president who will address the students' lack of trust in the current Title IX department; a president who will address the problem of sexual assault on campus; and a question about how the search process will follow the Faculty Handbook as it relates to the search. Co-Chair Hazel responded that the Board would be discussing that at the December Board of Visitors meeting.

Co-Chair Davis shared additional comments and questions from the note cards submitted by the audience (Attachments 2 and 3) and Webex participants that included: the date the position was listed publicly was September 6, 2019; the need for a person with an understanding of and experience with Title IX policies and knows how to implement them strategically, effectively, and successfully on a diverse university campus; experience and

commitment to sustainability in action on university campuses; varying comments about understanding the need for confidentiality in the search and questioning the need for a confidential search.

Additional comments from the audience included: the need for a person who will address the lack of accountability at Mason as it relates to Title IX violations; the need for the candidates to hear from people who have the questions and for the candidates to get a better vision of Mason; understanding the risk of the resentment the new president will face from the faculty if there is a closed search process; the need to have a candidate that is eager to learn and listen, compassionate and genuine, someone who can be championed, someone who makes the faculty happy, who is a genuinely a good leader.

Co-Chair Davis shared additional comments from Webex participants that included: the need for a person who has the skills to promote environmental sustainability, who can assist in achieving the goals of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, and can update the current climate action plan.

Additional comments from the audience included: the need for someone who upholds sustainability; a person who will commit to not taking donations from oil tycoons and will disaffiliate from campus think tanks that promote legislation for climate deregulation and tax cuts for the ultra-wealthy; the concern about the limited representation of students on the search committee; a person who not just appreciates the arts, but appreciates what a higher education is and should be beyond vocational training; a person who understands what the core of an undergraduate education should be; a person who understands that public universities are under threat, with diminishing resources from the state, and that lobbying for the public institution is part of the president's job.

Co-Chair Davis shared additional comments from the note cards that included: the need for someone who has a diversity of student experience, understands that Mason is a unique institution situated in a unique place in the country, and understands the diversity in the Mason community and the impact on student services.

Additional comments from the audience included: the need for a person who understands the importance of building an endowment; the concern that the alumni do not give to the university; someone who understands the importance of long-term relationships to build an endowment.

Co-Chair Hazel responded that building an endowment is not as easy as it used to be, but Mason has had more successes than in the past. He noted that alumni giving is on an upward trend and asked for the audience's help in reaching out to alumni.

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Additional comments from the audience included: the concern about the lack of trust between the faculty and the administration and between the students and the administration; the need for someone who accurately represents the students, the transparency, and accountability in the education system; the need to work with the faculty on the search process to find a solution to provide an open forum while maintaining confidentiality, noting the suggestion of having an online anonymous forum for faculty to have dialogue with the candidates; a previous Faculty Senate meeting was cited where suggestions and solutions for a confidential versus open search were shared with Rector Tom Davis with the understanding those would be brought to the Board of Visitors.

Rector Davis responded that the presidential search is a dynamic process and asked everyone to stay open as more input is received from the university community while looking at ways that an open process could be accomplished. He thanked everyone for their input.

A member of the audience asked if the search process had not been fully decided yet and if there was a possibility there could be changes in the search process. Co-Chair Hazel responded that the suggestions like the online forum had not been ruled out, but had not been decided yet. He noted that this was a Board of Visitors issue and it would be on the December Board Meeting agenda.

Additional comments from the audience included: the need for someone who will take the initiative to address diversity in the workplace to reflect the diversity in the student body.

Co-Chair Hazel thanked everyone for their participation and for the time they took to be present.

IV. Adjournment

Co-Chair Hazel adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathy Cagle
Secretary pro tem
Board of Visitors

Attachment 1: Minimum Qualifications, Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for the Next George Mason University President (List of points taken from the Position Description)

Attachment 2: Index Card Comments - Open versus Confidential Search

Attachment 3: Index Card Comments – General Comments and Questions

Presidential Search Website: <https://www2.gmu.edu/presidential-search>

Position Description: <https://www.greenwoodsearch.com/george-mason-university> (Click on Learn More)

Minimum Qualifications, Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for the next George Mason University President

Strong preference will be given to candidates with the following qualifications and attributes:

- An academic background and credentials, including an earned Ph.D., or highest degree in their chosen academic field.
- A successful record of academic leadership based on a combination of scholarly accomplishment and executive experience, or substantial leadership and career accomplishments with an understanding of and commitment to higher education.
- The demonstrated ability to attract and retain a superb diverse and inclusive faculty, student body and staff.
- A demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion that results in strong and positive relationships with individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences.
- The demonstrated ability to shape and lead the University with a compelling vision for a large, complex, multi-stakeholder institution.
- A demonstrated commitment to effective communication and collaborative work with a variety of partners, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors and community leaders.
- A highly communicative and transparent leadership style that fosters an environment of trust, excitement, and high morale among faculty, students, staff and the University community.
- The demonstrated ability to build institutional excellence, especially in the University's core functions of instruction, research and scholarship.
- A demonstrated commitment to scholarly and creative excellence, including the distinctive contributions of all the colleges and schools comprising this diverse, comprehensive Research 1 University.
- A demonstrated commitment to the teaching mission of this public research University in a rapidly changing world, including support for technology-enhanced teaching and learning.
- The commitment to represent the mission and opportunities of the University and the willingness to provide national and global leadership in higher education.
- A demonstrated record of exemplary personal values and a track record of values-based decision-making.
- A work ethic that prioritizes shared governance, integrity and transparency as core values that shape all campus processes and decision-making.
- The demonstrated ability to communicate persuasively in public and private settings.
- The demonstrated ability to develop excellent relations with all University stakeholders.
- A demonstrated ability to establish an effective leadership team.
- The demonstrated ability to think creatively and strategically while demonstrating an entrepreneurial spirit and a willingness to take risks.
- The demonstrated ability to increase resources including engaging productively with donors and securing large gifts.
- The demonstrated ability to effectively navigate politically sensitive matters and experience working with local, state and national governments.
- A proven record of experience with budgetary decision-making, framed by the financial issues currently facing public research universities.
- A proven record in fundraising, advancement activities and alumni relations and a capacity for cultivating a broad range of stakeholders.
- A demonstrated commitment to environmentally sustainable campus operations and responsible stewardship of natural resources and the environment.

What would be the point
of a completely closed search?

I have been a Mason for 31 years
and have seen many high level
administrative searches follow the
handbook and hold open sessions
with finalists.

→
That process is not only
stipulated, but ensures the
new president will not have
to start with by having to
contend with resentment and
suspicion.

We are only asking for the
last step to be open

What is the reason for not
having public process of
campus visits etc.

Tojo
School

Will the search committee
inform candidates that faculty
have expressed a strong desire
for an open forum with finalists?

SHARED GOVERNANCE
MEANS THAT WE
COMMUNICATE (STAKEHOLDERS)
AS EQUALS IN PROCESS.
WHAT IS THE BOV AFRAID OF?
THEY GET TO MAKE THE FINAL ^{info} DECISION. WHY NOT SHARE CAND.

Someone who is ~~not~~ willing to
be be questioned by faculty not

just 3 faculty on the committee
and someone who is ~~not~~ upset because
the Faculty Handbook is
being violated

While problematic in some ways,
could faculty/staff/students
who meet w/ the Presidential
finalists sign limited NDAs
to not disclose identities?

I want a president
confident enough to
follow the Faculty Handbook

Zachary Schrey

You include the words "inclusion," "collaborative," "transparent," and "shared governance" when describing the qualifications of our next President. How does a CLOSED search represent these values? Wouldn't a candidate that respects these values also want a candidate that wants an OPEN search?

Faculty and students have offered multiple solutions to balance confidential measures and have the community interact with the ~~finalists~~ finalists, drawing on utilizing technology. However, the administration refuses to entertain those thoughts. Why are faculty and student solutions being ignored?

FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR CAMPUS &
THE PUBLIC GOOD, WHY AREN'T YOU
ADVOCATING FOR AN OPEN DIALOGUE
WITH THE MASON COMMUNITY?

I strongly urge that the
Committee and B.O.V. follow
Section 1.2.5 of the Faculty
handbook and allow students,
faculty and staff to engage
w/finalists in a public forum

I would like to see
 a higher commitment to sustainability
 on campus, lead by the
 president. Environmental sustainability
 is last on the list, & I would like to
 see a higher priority for it

Would like to see us
 have a President w/
 military experience

* demonstrated understanding
 of demographics for future
 student body; ability
 (proven) to interact
 authentically w/ students &
 enjoys interaction w/ students.

We would like a President
 who understands, appreciates,
 and supports the Arts in
 a large, Research & university.

Vinda Monson
 Director, School of Music

I believe that the next president should have experiences or background that reflects Mason's diversity.

* I support keeping the pres. search confidential - its unreasonable to expect otherwise!

In the corporate world, and in academia, leaders seem to be more short-term and job hopping than in prior times.

How will we avoid this and find a president who is not looking ahead to the next job? And willing to tackle problems head-on.

WHEN WAS THE POSITION LISTED PUBLICALLY (DATE)? THANKS! 😊

September 6, 2019

The next candidate should have the ability to critically evaluate current structures, halt initiatives that are not cost effective or grounded in reliable data, and redirect financial / human resources appropriately.

- Would like the Arts be a significant consideration of the candidates
- Seeking a candidate who understands the importance of the arts to Mason as one of the front doors to the campus.
- Seeking an interest in and expression of support for the arts through facilities, support of creative research, attending on important events
- A good percentage of the philanthropy

for the university comes from the community through the arts

- An understanding of how the arts can be utilized to help promote and build the university

- How are we going to insure that the next president is fully supportive of and engaged in the teaching mission of the university? (This is currently covered explicitly by only one of the many bullet points in the position description). A suggestion: we should favor candidates with extensive past and current teaching experience, and an interest in continuing to teach at the undergraduate level.)

- What will the ^{search} committee do if a candidate arises to meet with faculty, students, and other stakeholders as part of the search? (And why would we want to hire someone without that disposition - isn't it in itself a desirable one of many of the key qualities listed in the description?)

I would like to
see a president who
focuses on the safety of
students related to sexual
assault.

I would love to have a president
who has a vision for building into
the Fairfax and Nova region/community.
50% of Fairfax County is multilingual.
50% of Mason is multilingual.
Can we build on this as a strength
of the region??