BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Presidential Search Committee Meeting
February 7, 2020
MINUTES

PRESENT: Co-Chairs Shannon Davis and Jimmy Hazel; Denise Albanese, Simmi Bhuller, Horace Blackman, Terri Cofer Beirne, Tom Davis, Mehmood Kazmi, Camden Layton, Ignacia Moreno, Carolyn Moss, Jon Peterson, Lauren Reuscher, Edward Rice, Carole Scott, Girum Urgessa, Bob Witeck, and Lisa Zuccari; and Secretary pro tem Cagle.

ABSENT: Germaine Louis

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES: Sharon Cullen, Ron Forehand, Jan Greenwood, and Julie Holley.

I. Call to Order
Co-Chair Hazel called the meeting to order 1:00 p.m. and thanked the committee members for their attendance.

II. Presidential Search Committee Co-Chairs’ Comments
Co-Chair Hazel explained the meeting would begin with a Public Comment session, with comment cards (Attachment 1) drawn by lottery, followed by a Presidential Search Committee discussion regarding any recommendations to the Board of Visitors. He thanked everyone in the room and those listening on Webex for their interest in this important topic. Co-Chair Hazel reported that the Search was in a very good position and that the comments from the audience were very helpful and important. He noted that due to the confidentially agreements that had been signed, the Committee would not be able to answer specifics questions.

Co-Chair Hazel asked that the faculty, staff, and students appreciate the work of their representatives on the Committee, noting they had been at been at every meeting and had participated fully.

Co-Chair Davis reported that Germaine Louis, one of the Committee members, was absent due to her attendance at a funeral. Co-Chair Davis asked that she be recognized as a full participant in the Search Committee.

III. Public Comment
The Co-Chairs drew names by lottery from a box and called on the corresponding speakers. The following speakers provided comments on the need for an open search, faculty and contingent faculty engagement, staff and student engagement, student protection, and observing the Faculty Handbook:
- Tamara Harvey (faculty)
- Chelsea Gray (student)
Co-Chair Hazel reported that all the public comment cards had been drawn and the speakers recognized. Due to the time allowance, he opened the floor for additional comments and recognized the following speakers who commented on the need for faculty support, supporting the faculty handbook, faculty dissatisfaction:

- MacKenzie Earl (student)
- Sarah Ahn (student)
- Virginia Hoy (faculty)
- Drew Rainer (student)

Co-Chair Hazel thanked the speakers for their comments and noted the meeting was available on Webex (recording on the Presidential Search website). He called the conclusion of the Public Comment Session.

Co-Chair Hazel explained the Committee would be discussing community engagement with the presidential candidates and noted the Faculty Senate statement that ranked three possible ways to have community engagement and the resolution from AAUP on the matter. He explained the Presidential Search Committee would ultimately hand the process to the Board of Visitors to work with the finalists.

Co-Chair Davis reported that since July 2019 there had been broad community engagement that had been unprecedented in recent Mason history. She noted that she had received close to 100 comments from the Mason community members to consider engagement that included consideration of the language included in the Faculty Handbook. She thanked those participants who provided written comments for the meeting, noting the majority of the comments reflected the same language that was presented through comments earlier in the meeting. Co-Chair Davis read Section 1.2.5 of the Faculty Handbook: “The search and selection process must include opportunities for the General Faculty to meet with candidates who are finalists for the presidency.” She asked the Committee to take the Faculty Handbook seriously, and to uphold the commitments in the Faculty Handbook and to each other. Co-Chair Davis noted that her comments would also include the opportunity for students and staff to engage with the finalists and to have the opportunity to provide feedback on the candidates. She asked the
Committee think about the recommendations from the Faculty Senate and the opportunities to have open sessions with the Mason community.

Co-Chair Hazel opened the floor for discussion and reviewed the three recommendations from the Faculty Senate:
- Open meeting with the General Faculty
- Subset of faculty members, to include staff and students; confidentiality agreements would need to be signed by all participants
- Using the internet in a new way to create an opportunity for the Mason Community to talk with the finalists

He noted he was committed that if there was a way for the community to engage with the finalists there would be multiple finalists and there would be time for the Board of Visitors to receive the feedback from the community.

Co-Chair Hazel recognized Rector Davis for comment. Rector Davis stated that when he first became a member of the Board of Visitors there was a move on the Board to remove that section of the Faculty Handbook, but that did not move forward. He stated that the Board thought it was important to keep the faculty involved. Rector Davis stated he wanted to find the best way to have community engagement with the finalists, but that method had not yet been determined and he would continue to have that conversation with the Board. He said there was a commitment to the Faculty Handbook and faculty involvement. Rector Davis thanked the attendees for their comments, participation, and involvement.

Co-Chair Hazel recognized members of the committee for their comments and questions about the options presented by the Faculty Senate. Co-Chair Davis responded with specifics of the Faculty Senate’s recommendations. Committee members offered their opinions on the engagement options, the committee composition, the process for future presidential searches, student involvement in the process, virtual online engagement, and the protection of the candidates’ confidentiality. Committee members asked about the process and if a vote on the process would be taken at the meeting. Rector Davis explained that his goal was to encourage the final candidates to engage in a public process. Discussion ensued regarding the purpose of a process vote at the current stage of the search.

Rector Davis offered a motion that the Presidential Search Committee recommend that the Board of Visitors uphold the letter and spirit of the Faculty Handbook in terms of the Presidential Search and input from the faculty. Discussion ensued regarding engagement challenges and concerns, representation of each constituency of the university, options
for engagement, concerns about candidates’ privacy and identifying the best person to lead Mason, transparency and inclusion, limiting options for engagement, and reaffirmation of the letter and spirit of the Faculty Handbook.

Co-Chair Davis MOVED to specifically ask that the Search Committee reaffirm the spirit and letter of the Faculty Handbook as written in Section 1.2.5 which states: “The search and selection process for the University president must include opportunities for the General Faculty to meet with candidates who are finalists for the presidency.” The motion was SECONDED by Bob Witeck. Rector Davis noted that it was his motion, but gave the floor and motion to Co-Chair Davis. Co-Chair Hazel called for a vote. **MOTION CARRIED BY MAJORITY VOICE VOTE**
Terri Cofer Beirne cast an opposing vote. Her dissenting vote was noted by Co-Chair Hazel.

Rector Davis thanked the committee for its recommendations and stated that he would convey the information to the Board at the Board of Visitors meeting at 3:00 p.m. that day.

Further discussions ensued regarding the three Faculty Senate options and the whether or not a vote was needed to recommend specific options to the Board of Visitors. Discussion ensued regarding the need for the Committee to identify any unacceptable options, the need to keep all options open for consideration, and the consideration of other options.

Girum Urgessa MOVED that the Committee vote on the three possible options for engagement presented by the Faculty Senate. Discussion ensued to clarify the motion. It was determined that the motion was to take a vote to determine whether or not to take a vote on the three options. Carole Scott SECONDED the motion. Discussion ensued for point of clarification, resulting in confirmation that it would be a vote to take a vote. Discussion continued regarding concerns about limiting the options, the vote process, and affirmation of pursuing the spirit and letter of the Faculty Handbook. Co-Chair Hazel noted that the motion was strong and was publicly stated. Girum Urgessa WITHDREW the motion.
IV. Adjournment
With no other business matters to come before the Committee, Co-Chair Hazel adjourned the meeting at 2:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Cagle
Secretary pro tem

Attachment 1: Comment Cards
Full Name (please print): Bethany Letica

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
- Faculty
- Staff
- Student
- Other

Comments (Optional):
PUBLIC SEARCH is critical to shared governance (cont.)
George Mason University
Presidential Search Committee Meeting, Public Comment
February 7, 2020; 1:05—1:50 p.m.

Please complete the form below to register to speak during the public comment session. Individual comments will be limited to three (3) minutes. Overall comment from the public will be limited to forty-five (45) minutes. The speaker selection process will be accomplished via lottery by the Committee Co-Chairs. You are encouraged to provide your comments in writing below in the event you are not selected to speak. All comments, written or spoken, will be reflected in the public record of this meeting.

Full Name (please print): Tamara Harvey

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
✔ Faculty
☐ Staff
☐ Student
☐ Other

Comments (Optional):
We want a president who will stay. Open search will help. (cont.)
Please live up to your promise to the faculty and host public presentations from all finalists for the presidential search.
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Full Name (please print): Chelsea Gray

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
☐ Faculty  ☐ Staff  ☑ Student
☐ Other GTA

Comments (Optional):
Question about BOV selection

(continued)
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Full Name (please print): [Signature]

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
- [ ] Faculty  
- [ ] Staff  
- [ ] Student  
- [ ] Other

Comments (Optional):

______________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________  
( cont)
Full Name (please print): Catherine E. Sanders

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):

☐ Faculty  ☐ Staff  ☐ Student

☐ Other

Comments (Optional):

I am in favor of a fully public search, with public forums with all finalists. I am especially concerned that (cont.)

Comments (continued):

Contingent faculty must have a full voice in the search, and that candidates have a chance to meet and hear the perspective of contingent faculty. Otherwise, they will not have a full pulse of the university they are considering leading.
Full Name (please print): Sarah D'Alexander

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
- Faculty
- Staff
- Student

Comments (Optional):
Would like to see equal access opportunities for the sessions to students, staff.

Comments (continued):
Faculty, and community members.
To be able to provide comments in person, virtual, and absentee.
Full Name (please print): Cassidy Pollard

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):

☐ Faculty     ☐ Staff     ☐ Student

☐ Other

Comments (Optional):
This process has been a farce of democracy. The board is again violating the faculty handbook by the first week. (cont.)

Comments (continued):
Of the students and faculty. This cannot stand and the finalists should come to campus effective immediately.
Full Name (please print): Dathan Alm

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):

☐ Faculty ☐ Staff ☐ Student
☐ Other

Comments:
Why ignore faculty? What's the point of signing off on the faculty handbook if you won't hold true to it? (cont.)
George Mason University
Presidential Search Committee Meeting, Public Comment
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Please complete the form below to provide written comments for the Committee's review. All comments, written or spoken, will be reflected in the public record of this meeting.

Full Name (please print): Dr. Linda A. Hanson

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
☐ Faculty ☐ Staff ☐ Student
☐ Other

Comments:

Would love to have Presidential candidate address the following:
please describe your thoughts regarding the importance and support of the Visual + Performing Arts in the context of a large liberal arts university.

Comments (continued):

Vision + Performing Arts in the context of a large liberal arts university.
Full Name (please print): Joan Bristol

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
☐ Faculty ☐ Staff ☐ Student
☐ Other

Comments:
Please show that you respect the legal process, that you respect the faculty and students, and that you respect the new president by adhering to the procedures laid out in the faculty handbook. A secret search makes a mockery of our university.
George Mason University
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Please complete the form below to provide written comments for the Committee’s review. All comments, written or spoken, will be reflected in the public record of this meeting.

Full Name (please print): Deborah M. Sánchez

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
☒ Faculty ☐ Staff ☐ Student
☐ Other

Comments:
The B.O.V are volunteers who are answerable to its public employees, its faculty and the faculty handbook which the B.O.V. has approved. The faculty handbook states the faculty must be allowed to meet the finalists for president of the university. Follow the Faculty Handbook.

Comments (continued):


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Please complete the form below to provide written comments for the Committee's review. All comments, written or spoken, will be reflected in the public record of this meeting.

Full Name (please print): Colleen Vesely

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
☑ Faculty    ☐ Staff    ☐ Student
☐ Other

Comments:

I am asking you to ensure there is a public forum for students, faculty, and the Mason community to meet and vet the finalists for the position of President at George Mason University — before they are hired. I fear that the finalists for this position who do not want/are okay with not having a public forum, are exactly the opposite of the kind of leader our public institution needs.

We need a President who during his/her search process sought the opportunity to meet with these groups, rather than hide from them. Finalists who seek a public forum with the Mason community are likely the candidates most interested in engaging with and partnering with faculty and students in transparent ways, when they become President. In addition, I am disappointed that the BoF is not upholding the faculty handbook, which notes faculty should have the opportunity to meet presidential search finalists.
Full Name (please print): Sharon Deitch-Kidd

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
☒ Faculty □ Staff □ Student
☐ Other

Comments:
Please respect the Faculty Handbook. Shared governance is the best practice for faculty searches by offering opportunities for faculty & students to meet at least 2 of the finalists for university president. Thank you!
Full Name (please print): Chelsea Gray

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):

☐ Faculty  ☐ Staff  ☑ Student

☐ Other

Comments:

I am the 3rd person since 2017 to file an OCR complaint. I testified in Richmond in Jan. 2020, publicly stating GMU's violations (cont.)

Comments (continued):

of federal law. The BOV is likely completely unaware of this. How can they adequately select a president to handle these issues, without public input, as they are unaware of many issues within the GMU community.
Full Name (please print): Xinyi (Amy) Zhang

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):

☐ Faculty  ☐ Staff  ☑ Student

☐ Other

Comments:

Please ensure a public president search with input from the entire Mason community and please hold public presentations of candidates. (cont.)

Comments (continued):

Candidates should be available for scrutiny and questioning by the faculty Senate. This ensures the health of our institution.
Full Name (please print): Emilio Obb

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):

☐ Faculty

☐ Staff

☑ Student

☐ Other

Comments:

It is very slim that the University would not want to be transparent about the University's President's search and would want to keep it.

Comments (continued):

information from its students, we hope that our next President will be better than the last, and we want to ensure that.
Full Name (please print): McKenzie Earl

Affiliation with Mason (Please check all that apply):
☐ Faculty  ☐ Staff  ☑ Student

☐ Other ____________________________

Comments:
Please release me details for how you plan to engage faculty in the final selection process. Failing to do so will only continue to degrade _________ (cont.)

Comments (continued):
University/faculty relationships. We need a meaningful engagement opportunity that is in the full spirit of the Faculty Handbook.