

**BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Special Meeting of the Board of Visitors
February 7, 2020
MINUTES**

PRESENT: Rector Davis, Vice Rector Hazel, and Secretary Blackman; Visitors Bhuller, Chimaladinne, Kazmi, Moreno, Moss, Rice, Witeck, and Zuccari; Faculty Representative Davis and Student Representatives Gelbvaks and Layton; Interim President Holton; and Secretary pro tem Cagle.

PARTICIPATED BY PHONE: Visitors Iturregui and Prowitt

ABSENT: Visitors Marquez, Reagan, and Roth.

- I. Rector Davis called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.
- II. Opening Remarks by Rector Davis

Rector Davis stated:

“In accordance with Virginia Code 2.2-3708.2 and our Board of Visitors Policy, two members have requested to participate in today’s meeting from a remote location by electronic means. Visitors Nancy Prowitt and Juan Carlos Iturregui will be joining this meeting by phone today.

Visitor Prowitt, for the record, please state the personal reason for your absence today and your location.”

Visitor Prowitt responded that she was in New York.

Rector Davis stated:

“Juan Carlos, for the record, please state the personal reason for your absence today and your location.”

Visitor Iturregui responded that he had a personal family commitment that prevented him from attending the meeting in Fairfax. He reported that he was in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Rector Davis stated that pursuant to the Board’s policy, he approved their participation.

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III. Rector Davis recognized Vice Rector Hazel, Co-Chair of the Presidential Search Committee. Vice Rector Hazel provided information from the Presidential Search Committee Meeting, held just prior to the Special Board of Visitors Meeting. He stated that the Committee passed a motion that the Presidential Search Committee supported complying with the Faculty Handbook even if it was in a creative way. He asked Shannon Davis for any additional comments.

Dr. Davis noted the specific language of the Committee's motion was that the Committee reaffirmed upholding the spirit and letter of the Faculty Handbook in Section 1.2.5 which states: The search and selection process must include opportunities for the General Faculty to meet with candidates who are finalists for the presidency.

Rector Davis asked Dr. Davis to provide background on the three engagement options that were discussed and voted on by the Faculty Senate. Dr. Davis provided information about the engagement options and the following set of formats in order of preference that were considered acceptable:

- Candidates meet with the faculty in a completely open meeting
- Subset of faculty members, to include staff and students; code of ethics would need to be signed by all participants
- Live meeting be held using a potentially an online mediated option that would hide the identity of the candidates

Rector Davis noted that there was some dissent on that motion, but that the key was to be sure of securing the best pool of candidates and to protect the candidates' identities, if needed, so their current jobs would not be in jeopardy. He noted that when the finalists are identified they would work to see if the candidates were amenable to in-person engagement and, if not, he thought the online option might be acceptable to the candidates. Rector Davis reiterated the need to uphold the Faculty Handbook.

Rector Davis recognized Visitor Witeck for information on the online engagement option. Visitor Witeck explained his experience with the Harris Poll and their research. He noted the advantages of online engagement, specifically highlighting the role of unconscious bias, a key component of the inclusion value at Mason, by removing race, gender, age, and ability and being able to hear a person on an equal basis. Visitor Witeck explained that a transcript of the interaction would be available immediately following the engagement. Rector noted that this option would provide the students a wider participation.

Vice Rector Hazel asked that record of the meeting show that the faculty, staff and student representation at the Presidential Search Committee meetings has been 100% in terms of attendance, participation, and the chance to answer

questions as the process moved forward. He thanked the representatives of those groups who had been part of the Search Committee.

- IV.** Vice Rector Hazel **MOVED** that the Board of Visitors delegate to the Rector the authority to consider the recommendation of the Presidential Search Committee regarding engagement of the General Faculty and other community members of George Mason University, and that the Rector be delegated full authority to determine, on behalf of the Board of Visitors, the means and circumstances for that engagement. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Bhuller.

Rector Davis expressed his assurance that he would not operate in a vacuum, but this would remove the necessity to call another Board of Visitors meeting to ratify a decision. He responded to questions and comments about this process. Vice Rector Hazel reported this action was done in consultation with the Attorney General and Interim President Holton.

Rector Davis asked that the approved motion from the Presidential Search Committee meeting be added to the motion for the Board of Visitors' ratification. The motion from the Presidential Search Committee meeting was as follows: *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.*

Discussion and comments ensued regarding input on the decision of the engagement process. Rector Davis responded to those comments.

Vice Rector Hazel accepted Rector Davis' friendly amendment to his original motion. Rector Davis restated and **MOVED** the motion with the friendly amendment and it was **SECONDED** by Visitor Bhuller. Rector Davis called for any discussion. There was none. Secretary pro tem Cagle advised that because there were Visitors participating by phone, a roll call vote was required. The roll call vote was accomplished. All members in attendance and participating by phone voted affirmatively.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE

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V. Adjournment

With no other business matters to come before the Board, Rector Davis adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathy Cagle
Secretary pro tem