

MINUTES
Board of Trustees of Illinois State University
April 6, 2021

Trustee Jones: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the second meeting of the committee to search for the 20th President of Illinois State University. Since the members of the Board of Trustees are part of the Search Committee, we are required to follow the provisions of the Open Meetings Act. I do want to note that we will not be discussing or voting on any resolutions this afternoon. I will now call this meeting of the Board of Trustees of Illinois State University to order. I note for the record that this meeting is being held pursuant to Governor Pritzker's Executive Order 2021-06. As Chair of the Board, I determined that as a result of the disaster declaration issued by Governor Pritzker, an in-person meeting would not be prudent, practical or feasible at this time. And as a result, this meeting is being held as a virtual meeting with no one physically present at the Board's regular meeting location in the Bone Student Center. As included in the notice of this meeting, the University has provided a YouTube link that allows all interested persons to contemporaneously view the meeting and hear public discussion. Accommodations have been made for presenters and persons wishing to make public comment to participate in the meeting via Zoom. Our Board's Secretary, Dr. Mary Ann Louderback is unable to join us today. So I'm appointing Dr. Kathy Bohn as Secretary pro tem for today's meeting. Trustee Bohn, will you please call the roll.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Bohn is present. Trustee Dobski.

Trustee Dobski: Here.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Donahue.

Trustee Donahue: Present.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Jones.

Trustee Jones: Present.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Louderback. Trustee Navarro.

Trustee Navarro: Present.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Turner.

Trustee Turner: Present.

Trustee Bohn: Chairperson Jones, we have a quorum.

Trustee Jones: Thank you, Trustee Bohn. I will ask that each trustee confirm that they can hear me, the other trustees and all discussion. Tracy Bohn.

Trustee Bohn: Yes.

Trustee Jones: Trustee Dobski.

Trustee Dobski: Yes.

Trustee Jones: Trustee Donahue.

Trustee Donahue: Yes.

Trustee Jones: Trustee Navarro.

Trustee Navarro: Yes.

Trustee Jones: Trustee Turner.

Trustee Turner: Yes.

Trustee Jones: If at any point during the meeting you're having difficulty hearing any other trustee or any discussion, please let me know. Also, pursuant to the requirement of the Open Meetings Act, all votes taken at today's meeting will be roll call votes. Each board member's vote on each issue will be identified and recorded.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

You have before you the agenda for today's meeting. Can I have a motion and a second to approve the agenda?

Trustee Donahue: Trustee Donahue motions.

Trustee Navarro: Navarro will second.

Trustee Jones: We have a motion by Trustee Donahue and a second by Trustee Navarro. Trustee Bohn, can you call the roll for the vote?

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Bohn votes yes. Trustee Dobski.

Trustee Dobski: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Donahue.

Trustee Donahue: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Jones.

Trustee Jones: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Navarro.

Trustee Navarro: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Turner.

Trustee Turner: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: The motion is approved.

Trustee Jones: Thank you, Trustee Bohn.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Trustee Jones: Next on the agenda is public comment. We have one individual who has indicated an interest in making public comments to the Board today. In accordance with policy, the Board of Trustees will allow up to 30 minutes in total for public comment and questions during a public meeting. An individual speaker is limited to five minutes for his or her presentation. If more than two persons wish to speak on a single item, it is recommended that they choose a person to speak for them. The Board of Trustees will accept copies of speaker presentations, questions, and other relevant written materials. If you have any written materials you want to share with the trustees, you may send them to bot@ilstu.edu. When appropriate, the Board of Trustees will provide a response to the speaker's questions within a reasonable amount of time. At this time, I invite Trevor Rickerd to proceed with comments to the Board.

Trevor Rickerd: Hi. If the people involved in the hiring process of a new president want to be able to hire a good president and will fit the campus community, here's what you can do. You can open the process up for the campus

community, let the people have a democratic say in who they want to be in a position of leadership in their own community. Give people a chance to not only make clear what they want in a president but also the power of agency in the process instead of what is going on now with this secretive, top-down, authoritarian approach. We sure as hell wouldn't call our country a democracy if a bunch of federal administrators and executives were only in their positions of power by appointment instead of democratic rule had the sole power of choosing a U.S. President in secret. We sure as hell wouldn't accept the same thing, the same exact thing happening here. Another thing the Presidential Search Committee can do is actually deal with the growing labor issues on campus, because these problems aren't just going to go away if you ignore them. The Graduate Workers Union still has yet to see any substantial movement from the University in negotiations despite mischaracterizations that the Dietz administration is posing on its anti-union propaganda page. Despite what the site says, the University's Bargaining Team is not offering any amount of fee waivers, only re-stating that we are getting a reimbursement of our health care fees that we already have. This changes literally zero in material means. We're not even mentioning the fact that in the last Board of Trustees meeting, the Dietz administration recommended that they raise mandatory fees even more. This would completely negate the minuscule pay increase that they are offering at the bargaining table right now. And what is hilarious is that this isn't even the first time that you guys have done this. The last time you gave TAs a raise, you immediately coupled it with an increase in mandatory fees that far outpaced our pay raise, effectively making our take-home pay even less than it was before. And, yes, that's a pay cut. You can tell me that you paid me \$1,000 a month, but if you're immediately taking \$300 in fees, you're effectively paying me \$650 a month. The more you raise fees, the less my monthly take-home pay. We're not stupid. We can do math. The amount of disrespect at this University has towards its graduate workers is ridiculous. Even when the Academic Senate voted to halt the formation of a college of engineering, the Dietz administration just went right on ahead talking as if that vote didn't even happen. They'll just say that the Academic Senate is no longer the primary governing body of the University, but, instead, it's just now purely advisory and isn't necessary for the purpose of approving huge projects or expenses. Even if they were just advisory, you might want to take their advice and give the Graduate Workers Union a fair contract that will actually significantly improve the lives of our 400 TAs who perform so much of the revenue-generating labor on campus. The reason the Academic Senate voted down the college of engineering was blatantly clear. They stand in solidarity with the Graduate Workers Union and will hold the process up until you give us a fair contract. We know you're screwing with us, and you're not taking us seriously, and you're making a mistake. Right now as we speak, we are holding our strike authorization vote to allow our bargaining team, including me, to authorize a strike if we are to reach an impasse. At this point we will have met each legal criteria to form a strike. Dietz, I know this college of engineering is so important to your legacy, to your ego. If you want that college of engineering, you know what the conditions are. Capitulate or face the consequences.

Trustee Jones: Does that conclude your comments, Mr. Rickard? Thank you. We will now move on to the agenda item which is to report on the President search update. And for that report... Oh, wait a minute. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I lost my place just a little bit. First, I'd like to remind all the Committee members that our discussion in Executive Session today follows the same guidelines as any other meeting of the Board of Trustees with regard to Executive Session. Our discussion will be limited to the selection of our University's next President and a review of candidate materials that have been received. That is all that we will be discussing in Executive Session, as we are also bound by the section of the code that says what our topic can be for Executive Session. So I just want to remind everyone of that. As the Board of Trustees, we are constantly reminded by our Board counsel to make sure that we limit Executive Session to acceptable topics, and I wanted to make sure that for the record I reminded all of our Search Committee of that same requirement. We'll now move on to the next item on the agenda, which is a report on the Presidential search update, and for that report I will turn things over to Zach Smith from Wittkiewer Consulting Firm.

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH UPDATE

Zach Smith: Thanks, Chair Jones. And welcome, everybody. It's a pleasure to be here today to talk about your process. I thought a couple things that I would provide to you before we go into Executive Session, as Chair Jones said – an overview of where we are today, where we've been, and then some information about next steps. So far, as of today, we have 58 total applications for the position, which is about what we might expect for a search like this. It does, obviously, vary from presidential search to presidential search, but that's a pretty typical number for a search like this. We reached out to over 2,500 people about the opportunity, and we also had 69 people who were nominated for the position. So anytime a person is nominated for the position, we reach out to them and let them know that they were nominated and offer an opportunity to speak with us if they're interested in the position. Of course, we do additional followup with hundreds of people in what we call a search record that we create based on

the feedback that we got from the community before we went into the market. We also advertised quite broadly in different outlets. Some of the outlets included a number of diversity outlets. We also advertised in some of the more standard outlets that you might expect, places like The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, Higher Ed Jobs, and so forth. And so we did post some of those ourselves, and also the campus posted some of those based on some existing subscriptions and memberships that you have as a campus where you're able to get better rates for those advertisements. I think from a market perspective, the feedback that we received was very positive. I think from a high-level view, people in the higher education universe sees Illinois State as a solid institution that's doing a lot of great things, a great culture, a great campus, good people. We got some questions about the engineering program because of what's highlighted in the profile as an initiative that was moving forward, so there were some questions when that was voted down, and it may have impacted the pool slightly. We don't know, but we did get some questions about that. But, overall, I would say the feedback that we received from candidates who we talked to was very positive, and I would say that the response was very robust and good in light of the conditions that we're all in in this pandemic environment.

The other thing I wanted to mention today is that we do want to remind the committee and the group that the candidates' names should be kept confidential at this stage in the process and throughout the process. We have told candidates that their names will not be released publicly, and for some candidates that was a condition of them being in the pool. If they knew their names were to become public, some of the candidates would have opted not to have applied. So we did just want to remind the committee about confidentiality. After the process today in Executive Session when we go through the candidates and talk about who you'd like to move forward for interviews, we will be doing those interviews on April 22nd and 23rd. We're holding those dates, I think, on everybody's calendars. So that will be the next step in the process. We will develop some interview questions for those interviews. We'll work with Chair Jones and others to come up with a set of interview questions that are acceptable for the committee, and we'll proceed in that way. That concludes my update, Chair Jones. Happy to answer any questions that anybody has.

Trustee Jones: Thank you, Zach. Do we have any questions? We have a question from Rick Valentin. Or it is Valenteen?

Rick Valentin: It's actually Valentin.

Trustee Jones: That's okay. Happens all the time.

Rick Valentin: I had a general question for the representatives at Wittkiewer. Considering that in our last meeting you mentioned the Oregon State University presidential search as an example of why this search should be kept private and in the meantime there has been a lot of controversy, and I believe the Oregon State University President stepped down recently. I was wondering if you could address how Wittkiewer is amending or changing their vetting process for candidates since we're going to be dependent on that since it's very difficult with a private search to ask people in general what they think about the President of so and so because they become immediately suspicious if you're on a search committee. They assume that you're asking about the president of their university because that person is looking to get a job at Illinois State. So I was wondering if you could just, in general, address how you're amending your vetting process for us?

Zach Smith: Sure, and it might be helpful to just let you know what the vetting process was so that you're aware. So as you can appreciate their aspect of that search that I can't speak to out of concerns of client privacy, there are also aspects of that search that have been reported that are false and taken out of context, but we can't comment on some of those aspects because of personnel reasons and other things, but I can tell you that we've always had an exceptional reputation as it comes to our due diligence process. So let me tell you some of the things that we do as it relates to our due diligence, and hopefully that will answer some of your questions. And these are all things that we did in that search as well. So we do in-depth phone screenings and interviews with all of the top candidates in the search. That's the first step that we do when we're vetting candidates. We do on-list and off-list references. And in the case of OSU, we did eight references in total. We talked to two board members at LSU who gave high marks on their recommendations for President Alexander. We also did comprehensive media and public records checks on all the finalist candidates, including a 450-page media report on Mr. Alexander that we shared with the Search Committee and that we also reviewed with the Search Committee in depth before a hiring decision was made. We do verifications of employment, employment history and education credentials. We also have all candidates who

are finalist candidates sign a harassment and discrimination questionnaire that asks a series of questions about their commitment to or any issues that relate to harassment and discrimination that they've had to face in their role as a leader in their previous work. In addition, all of the candidates in that search, like they will do in this search, went through multiple interview processes, both with the Board, with the Search Committee, and with an expanded group of campus constituents who all had the chance to ask tough questions of the candidate and to listen to their responses. These were multiple hours of interviews in addition to the multiple hours of phone screens and interviews that we do. It also included asking those tough questions as well. We also work with the Committee and the Board at the end of the process to go over all of the information. In this case, we also did a leadership assessment of all the finalist candidates, and the results of that assessment were also shared with the Board. So we follow all of our industry standards as it relates to comprehensive due diligence. One thing that we can't do is if somebody doesn't share information with us, that's something that we can't control, but we do ask all of the difficult questions. We ask them of all the references that we've talked to. We ask them in multiple different ways on multiple different occasions. And, as you probably know, there's a lot more behind what you do read in the media and other reports that you see that unfortunately I can't share at this time. I hope that, at least, gives you a sense of the due diligence that we did on that search and also the due diligence that we have done and will continue to on this search and every search.

Trustee Jones: Thank you, Zach. Do we have any other questions from the Search Committee? Dr. Kalter.

Senate Chair Kalter: I just wanted to thank Professor Valentin for his question, and I wondered if you could clarify just one thing, Zach, and that is at one point in the process do the on-list and off-list references, those phone calls, occur, given that the candidates have said I don't want, you know, to have those off-list types of contacts going on lest my institution know that I'm looking. So if you could clarify when those things actually happen during the search.

Zach Smith: For all of our searches, regardless of how they're conducted, public searches, confidential searches, which we do both as a standard of practice... For all of our searches, we do reference checks after the first-round interview process. So every search is usually confidential up through that first-round process, which is a larger group of interviews with the Committee like we'll do, so that could be 10-12 candidates or so, give or take. And the reason is because it's always confidential 99% of the time up through that process, and so it's challenging then to go and do referencing when we're trying to encourage applications and encourage people to come into the pool without yet alerting their campuses, because that does cause issues for many candidates. If there are red flags that we've identified in our own vetting process, we will go back to a candidate before that first-round interview and say, look, we need to check this out. You have a gap in your resume, for example. Is there somebody we can talk to? Or that might not be significant enough, but if there is something that we've identified, we will always try and go and find more information out about that situation, just to confirm what we've identified as being factual or what they told us as being factual. Once we get past that first-round interview stage, then we do a series of on-list references. Usually for a presidential search, we'll do about four or five on-list references for those finalist candidates. So if you advance a list of, let's say, four candidates to be a finalist, we would then do those on-list references at that time on those candidates. And so even in a confidential search, we do ask candidates to provide us with references at that time who we can contact, and so they work with us on providing us that list, and we reach out at that time. We don't typically call off-list references until we know who the top-emerged candidates are after that finalist interview. Again, that's because we don't want to cause problems for candidates if they're not going to emerge as a top candidate. So, just to give you an example. You might interview four candidates as finalists, and you may collect feedback from everybody who interviewed those candidates, and the feedback on two of those candidates might be very poor. So two of the candidates may have not done well in the interview. You just don't see the alignment with Illinois State, in this case, and so we wouldn't want to call office references on those people if they're not going to rise to the top at the end of the process. So we would not call off lists on people who are still not viable at that stage in the process. But once we get to... Let's say you have a couple candidates who have emerged that you're maybe weighing between, one or two candidates, at that point we would go back to the candidates and say, okay, we need to call some additional references that weren't on your original list. And so it becomes a little bit of a negotiation at that point with the candidates. We typically will say here are some questions that we still have. Here are some questions the committee has, the campus has, so we need to find some people we can talk to who can respond to some of those questions. And so it's a little bit... In a confidential search, it's more of a negotiation to call off-list references once we get to the end of the process, but if somebody knows that they're emerging as one of the stronger candidates, they're going to be more willing to provide us with some additional options for us to call. In some cases

we'll say can we speak to this type of person on your campus. Can we call a couple deans, for example, to get their take on your leadership on the campus? And so there's a little bit of that negotiation back and forth once we get to that process. But, again, in the referencing we ask very direct specific questions to the references, and we ask them in many different ways. We do, you know, hundreds of these, you know, in our firm, hundreds of them probably a week. So we are very skilled at listening, very skilled at following up when we hear things that might raise a flag for us, and so that's what we do, and we also look at the quality of the reference, if it's a high-quality reference. For example, at Oregon State when we talked to two board members, you would consider something like that a high-quality reference, people who are going to provide some important information for you to get a sense of the candidate and their leadership ability. So hopefully that answers your question.

Senator Kalter: It does. Thank you. That's very similar to the way we do other searches on the campus. But given that we have an audience of the general public right now, I just wanted to get that clarified. Thank you.

Zach Smith: Sure. No problem.

Trustee Jones: Thank you, Dr. Kalter, for your question and Zach for your answer. Trustee Donahue, I can see your hand. And then after that it will be Leanna Bordner.

Trustee Donahue: Thanks. I may have mis-heard or maybe I just have the wrong dates, but I thought you had said that the first-round interviews would take place the 22nd and 23rd, and I have it as the 21st and 22nd on my calendar, so I'm just looking for clarification what two days it is exactly.

Zach Smith: Yeah, my apologies. I think I misspoke. It's the 21st and 22nd. Thank you for the clarification.

Trustee Jones: It's the 21st and 22nd.

Zach Smith: Yeah, I misspoke.

Trustee Jones: Thank you, Trustee Donahue. Leanna.

Leanna Bordner: Yes. Zach, thank you for that information. You brought up red flags, and as we move into the session concerning evaluating candidates, are you prepared to on the front end share some of the red flags that we may, you know, in a public way have knowledge of so that, you know, we may or may not spend, you know, an inordinate amount of time on a candidate if it's something that puts up a red flag for us?

Zach Smith: Absolutely. That's why we're here. So we will absolutely talk through some of those questions that maybe we had about a candidate. You know, for the committee, you will have noticed the way that we organize the candidates. You may have thought I wonder why they put that person on this list versus that list, and there may not be an obvious reason based on the materials, but there may be some things that we learn during the process that would raise questions. And there might be the same for people on, you know, your top list. There are some candidates there who have things that, you know, they've done. Anytime you're in a leadership role, you face a lot of criticisms, and you also, you know, you do a lot of good things, also. So it's nearly impossible to be a leader of a university in this day in age and not have issues that you're dealing with on your campus, even lawsuits that may have filed against you. So our media check process uncovers those types of things. We also ask those questions to all of the candidates like I said earlier. Unfortunately, when people don't disclose things to us, it's really difficult to handle those situations, but that's why we do a 360 type of assessment on the candidates and talk to other people. We also do the media checks. We have a lot of different data points that we're looking at as it relates to the candidates. But, yes, Leanna, we will absolutely bring those to the table.

Leanna Bordner: Thank you, Zach.

Trustee Jones: Any further questions? Thank you, Leanna. Thank you, Zach. Any further questions for Zach? If you have a question, if you could use the reaction icon and put your hand up, that would be great. It's a little difficult to try to identify you, otherwise. Okay. I don't think I see any other questions. Thank you, Zach. I will now entertain a motion to move into Executive Session for the purpose of considering the appointment,

employment, compensation of specific employees pursuant to 5 ILCS Section 120/2C1. Can I have a motion and a second from one of the trustees?

Trustee Navarro: Navarro moves to go into Executive Session.

Trustee Bohn: Bohn seconds.

Trustee Jones: We have a motion by Trustee Navarro and a second by Trustee Bohn. Trustee Bohn, can you please proceed with calling the roll for the vote?

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Bohn yes. Trustee Dobski:

Trustee Dobski: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Donahue.

Trustee Donahue: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Jones.

Trustee Jones: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Navarro.

Trustee Navarro: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Turner.

Trustee Turner: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: The motion is approved.

Trustee Jones: Thank you, Trustee Bohn. We will now move into Executive Session. Following the Executive Session, the Board will move back into Public Session for the sole purpose of adjournment.