

Policy Statement on Academic Administrative Searches

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Recruiting and selecting academic administrators in accordance with the principles of shared governance is vital to institutions' ability to fulfill their public responsibilities for scholarship and education. As such, search processes must be open and must be conducted by search committees that are struck by and accountable to collegial governance bodies, and on which academic staff are the majority of members. The search committee must retain sole decision-making authority over the search process, conducted in accordance with institutional policy that has been approved by Senate and is consistent with collective agreements negotiated between the institution and its academic staff association.

2

Searches that are conducted in secrecy undermine shared governance. They reinforce management control and widen the gulf between academic administrators and the collegium. Open searches provide insight into candidates' capabilities, knowledge of the institution, and approach to leadership; meaningfully inform the selection process; and allow candidates to better understand the institution they might lead. They convey to finalists that their role hinges on their willingness to speak, listen, and answer to the campus community. An open search can engender trust in the search process by demonstrating that the search has been wide, thorough, and competitive.

3

An open search involves an open finalist phase, with at least three candidates. Where the initial pool of applicants is insufficient to allow for three qualified finalists, or where it is not sufficiently diverse to meet equity goals, the search committee should extend or reconstitute the search following a report to and consultation with the relevant governing bodies. Each finalist should visit campus, make public presentations that include opportunities for questions from those present, and meet with a diversity of campus groups, including the academic staff association. The committee should solicit campus input, to be considered during final deliberations. Where finalists are external, the search committee should solicit input from the most appropriate home department concerning the candidate's suitability for tenure at the institution. All input provided to the committee should be held in confidence.

4

The routine use of search firms and the influence they exert over critical decisions are inseparable from the corporatization of higher education and the erosion of meaningful academic staff participation in shared governance. They also divert resources from the institution's academic mission. For these reasons, the use of search firms should be avoided. However, if the committee decides to engage a search firm after a thorough deliberation that considers the disadvantages and costs, the search firm selection criteria should be decided by the committee, and should include a demonstrated commitment to equity. In this case, the decision to engage a search firm and the rationale for doing so should be communicated to the relevant governance bodies prior to a firm being selected. The committee alone should select the search firm. The only role of the search firm should be to support the committee, at the committee's direction. The search committee should ensure that any unsolicited applications are treated identically to those solicited by the search firm.

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Search committees for presidents and academic vice presidents should be joint committees of the Board and Senate. Search committees for other academic administrators, such as deans, should be committees of the appropriate academic governance body. Search committees should include

academic staff who are members of the relevant governance bodies, elected by those bodies, and should include academic staff from other appropriate constituencies, elected by those constituencies. All elections should be conducted following an open nomination process. Search committees should include a representative of the academic staff association, who is an academic staff member and is selected by the association. Every effort should be made to ensure that search committees reflect the diversity of the academic community at the institution, and that barriers to equitable participation are identified and removed.

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The governing policy should include clear rules for quorum and committee voting procedure. Each search committee should select its own chair. All committee members should have full and equal rights of participation, including the right to ask initial or follow-up questions during the interview process.

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All search committee members should be required to complete equity training prior to participation in committee deliberations. Equity considerations should guide the entire search process, starting from the committee's earliest deliberations.

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The search committee should determine each of the following, subject to the governing policy: the phases and timing of the search process; the process for campus consultations; the plan for advertising the position; interview questions and format; and questions for reference checks. All campus consultations should be led by members of the search committee, advertised widely and should be held at times that will enable maximum participation. As part of the advertising plan, the search committee should invite the campus community to suggest potential candidates. The committee should provide clear and timely communication of decisions and progress updates to the relevant governing bodies and constituencies. The search committee should determine the degree and type of confidentiality at each phase of the search, and these decisions should be communicated to applicants and to the institutional community. Confidentiality agreements should be consistent with principles of academic freedom. They should not prevent committee members from commenting on general issues about the search process, violation of policy, or suggestions for improvement. These agreements should be posted on a webpage for the search.

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The committee should develop and recommend a position profile and selection criteria to the appropriate governing bodies, following consultation with the relevant constituencies and prior to advertising. Equity considerations should be incorporated into the position profile and criteria, as well as the advertising plan. Demonstrated ability to foster shared governance of the institution should be included in selection criteria and in duties listed in the position profile.

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All information relevant to the search process should be provided to the search committee, including all applicant and reference check information. Members of the search committee should participate in all filtering, long-listing, and short-listing phases. Under no circumstances should parties other than members of the search committee engage in the screening of applications.

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Only candidates recommended for appointment by the search committee should be appointed, and the committee should have the right to recommend that none of the applicants be appointed. Search committee members should have the option of submitting minority reports, as attachments to the majority report. Should the search not result in an appointment being made, the search

committee should reconstitute the search following consultation with the relevant governing bodies.

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Following completion of a search, the committee should report in writing on the search, addressing at least: the number of applicants; the profile of the applicant pool by factors including but not limited to internal and external candidates and representation of equity-seeking groups; recommendations for policy or procedural improvements; and assessment of any search firm involvement with associated total cost. This report should be submitted to the relevant governance bodies, integrated into a publicly available historical record, and provided to search committees for subsequent searches.

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