



## Board of Regents

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DATE: September 25, 2017

TO: Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: Andrew Petersen  
Regent Vice President and Work Group Chair

RE: Administrative Hiring Workgroup Report

### **Background**

The Wisconsin State Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance adopted a budget motion that prohibited the University of Wisconsin System from requiring the Board of Regents to only consider individuals who have been faculty members, have been granted tenure, or who have terminal degrees for the positions of UW System President, University Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor. These changes were included in the final budget signed by Governor Walker on September 21<sup>st</sup>.

In response to these changes, Board President John Robert Behling announced the creation of this administrative hiring workgroup at the July 6<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. The workgroup was tasked to review existing board policies and procedures and to make recommendations on possible changes that would potentially attract more non-traditional candidates to executive leadership hiring searches.

Unlike some other higher education entities, the UW System has not actively recruited or often attracted candidates from outside of academia. Many university stakeholders, including the state legislature, have encouraged the Board to make an effort to diversify the backgrounds of the candidates for executive leadership positions within the system.

### **Research and Review**

One of the tasks of this workgroup was to review existing hiring policies and procedures. The workgroup learned the average time from the announcement of a Chancellor's resignation to the naming of a replacement is roughly 40 weeks, or 9 months. The workgroup also learned this number has decreased in recent years, and the last 6 chancellor searches were closer to 7 months on average.

The search process that proceeded after the resignation of UW System President Kevin Reilly in 2013 lasted roughly 4.5 months.

Human Resources provided an overview of the backgrounds of applicants for the most recent chancellor search processes. Of 630 total applicants, 52 were from outside higher education. Only one of these candidates eventually was named a finalist, and that was Chancellor Rebecca Blank from UW-Madison, who was working at the United States Department of Commerce at the time of the search, but had previously been a tenured faculty member.

The workgroup also reviewed research highlighting the current backgrounds and demographics of university presidents. Key takeaways from the 2017 American Council on Education (ACE) American College President Study reviewed and shared with the group include:

- 12% of public college presidents reported their most immediate position was outside of higher education, a rate that has remained consistent since 2011;
- 49% of college presidents have spent their entire career in higher education;
- 59% of presidents of public institutions are 61 years old, and 11% are 71 or older. Over half of college presidents plan to retire in the next five years.

The role of a university president is changing, with less focus on traditional academics and more on management and external relations. Again, the same ACE survey indicated 65% of chancellors or presidents say budget and management are the primary task they find most time consuming, with fundraising a close second. This shift has led to fewer chief academic officers being interested in seeking the position of president or chancellor.

Wisconsin is not alone in addressing these issues, and the workgroup reviewed a number of hiring policies and practices from other states. The group also discussed the results from some of the more prominent non-academic hires around the country.

### **Conclusions/Recommendations**

Members of the work group discussed a number of potential changes to UW System policies and processes. There was general agreement and consensus the current search and screen process has become cumbersome and desperately needs to be reformed and modernized for the future. The workgroup also strongly agreed, given the forecasted trends in Chancellor retirements, the hiring process should be inclusive of non-traditional, non-academic candidates, and that future searches will have to not only allow for these candidates to apply, they will have to include an active recruitment process that includes members of the search committee. Finally, the workgroup expressed unanimous support for increasing our efforts to better develop the existing talent within UW System, and to help prepare them to step into leadership positions on campus and at the System level.

Based on the review and research presented to the work group, and the discussions we had during our meetings, I offer the following list of recommendations to the board:

- Publicizing all candidates who reach the semi-finalist phase has a negative impact on our ability to recruit top-rated public and private sector leaders -- especially those in high-level executive or other high-profile positions. Instead, we should commit to publicly announce only the final two or three candidates for positions, not more.
- To anyone from outside of academia, our search process is too long and the committee process is too cumbersome. It not only is inefficient, it also serves as a disincentive for non-academic candidates who see the process as too bureaucratic. To promote greater efficiency in the process and more Board of Regents accountability, the board recommends the size of search committee to ten members. The search committee would include five Regents, two faculty (one of which must have a focus on research if the

search is being conducted for UW-Madison or UW-Milwaukee), one staff representative from the institution, one local community member, and one student, all to be appointed by the President.

- When new leaders are hired from private institutions or non-academic backgrounds, we need to properly prepare, train and professionally develop them for that transition and be purposeful about higher education acculturation and develop a blueprint for success.
- UW System has some of the best faculty, staff, and administrators in the world. Developing existing talent to prepare them to serve as the next generation of campus and system leadership is paramount to the success of the University of Wisconsin System. We need to enhance talent and professional development opportunities for existing staff.
- While there are no system-wide policies that prohibit the recruitment and hiring of non-academic candidates for Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, there are campus policies that do. Those policies must now be updated to reflect the changes in state laws that were passed as part of the state budget that prohibit institutions from requiring candidates have terminal degrees or could be considered for tenure at the institution.
- The Board has not restricted or blocked the hiring of non-academic candidates, but it has not actively recruited and welcomed them either. The Board should take steps to be more aggressive and inclusive in the recruitment of non-academic candidates, including how position descriptions are drafted and how our search firms are engaged.
- Finally, to promote more consistency from campus to campus and to ensure an efficient search process, UW System Human Resources will develop a standard template position description that will include both standardized language and room for campus-specific job duties and qualifications. Local campus and community input (and involvement) in the crafting of specific position descriptions identifying specialized attributes of importance to that campus will be crucial to ensuring positive search outcomes and Chancellor/President hires.

## **Work Product**

Resolution

## **Acknowledgements**

I greatly appreciate the efforts of the members of the workgroup, who gave of their time and provided thoughtful input throughout the process. Each member brought their own unique set of experiences and perspectives to the table, and our discussions reflected perspectives from both inside and out of academia.

I'd also like to thank the staff who provided extensive support and thoughtful research on this important topic. Thanks to their work we were well informed of how other states have addressed this issue, as well as our own existing processes and history on the subject.