

Charged with promoting the general welfare of the university as an advisory committee to the university president, the Faculty Senate periodically reviews existing policies and, as part of the discharge of these responsibilities has drafted this letter to the Presidential Search Advisory Committee (PSAC).

First, on behalf of the university faculty members, the Faculty Senate would like to express appreciation to the PSAC and Academic Search for the manner in which the Required and Referred Qualifications for the incoming president were developed. The town hall meetings and the opportunity to provide feedback online provided an excellent opportunity for faculty, staff, students, and community members alike to share their perspectives. More importantly, the committee's revisions of the criteria, including the reordering and clarification of the qualifications, were greatly appreciated by the university faculty, as these changes highlight the importance of the academic mission of the university.

Second, the Faculty Senate would like to take this opportunity to elaborate on the general faculty sentiment that the incoming president should have an academic background, including membership in an academic faculty. There are two primary reasons that an academic background is essential to the fulfillment of the duties of the university president.

- 1) An academic background is necessary to understand the unique nature of the academic mission and to interact effectively with the Board of Regents.** Although the current political and economic environment dictates that state funded academic institutions assume a more for-profit financial model, the mission of higher education has remained unchanged: to provide students with rigorous undergraduate and graduate education in the liberal arts, sciences, and the professions.

The president's role, as defined in policy, is

- to work "under the direction of the Board of Regents, providing the administrative leadership needed for the work of the university,"
- to be "the responsible agent of the Board of Regents and the chief executive of the university, directly accountable to the Board," and
- to be "responsible to the Board of Regents for every phase of the university's operation."

To fulfill these responsibilities to the Board of Regents and the university at large, the president must have first-hand knowledge of academia. We recognize that an individual's strong background in business, industry, or politics certainly is evidence that an individual possesses significant leadership qualities that would likely serve a candidate well as a university president. However, such a background cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of the unique nature of academia necessary to provide perspective to a Board of Regents that is necessary when weighing decisions regarding policy changes.

For example, decisions regarding the timing of implementing each step of the master plan, change to tuition and fees, expansion of online education, increase of the student body, and budgetary decisions across campus are associated with a number of intended and unintended consequences. Without an academic background, the president cannot accurately discuss the impact of such changes on the university's ability to fulfill the academic mission of the university.

- 2) **University policy requires the university president to fulfill roles that, by their nature, require an academic background.** Although the university president can rely heavily on his/her vice presidents in the dispatch of his/her duties, there are significant areas in which firsthand experience in academia is essential. A sample of these responsibilities include:
- *Serving as an ex-officio officer on all faculty committees.* As such, the university president technically serves on the Faculty Senate and the Core Curriculum Committee among other committees. As most faculty committees deal directly with academic issues, an academic background is essential to making a meaningful contribution to such committees.
 - *Makes the final recommendation regarding tenure and promotion.* Not only does the president provide the final review of faculty applying for tenure and promotion prior to presentation to the Board of Regents, the president holds the power to put forward a faculty applicant, even when previous layers of review have voted against award. Without an academic background, it is impossible to make meaningful determinations regarding a faculty member's fulfillment of teaching, research, and service responsibilities.
 - *Makes the final determination following both Due Process Hearings and Faculty Grievance Hearings.* Thus, the president provides the final ruling in all faculty issues such as determinations of academic responsibility, academic freedom, and faculty member fitness. Clearly, it would be nearly impossible to rule on any of these issues without prior membership in a university faculty.
 - *Provides final determination for dismissal of tenured faculty for cause.* Among other reasons for dismissal, a tenured faculty member may be dismissed for "professional incompetence" and or "neglect of professional duties." Again, without membership in an academic faculty, an academic background is essential for judging both faculty incompetence and neglect.

The Faculty Senate understands that the Board of Regents will ultimately select the next university president. However, we also recognize that you, as a member of the Presidential Search Advisory Committee, will ultimately develop the short list of applicants for the Board's consideration. In this role, we urge you to ascribe the utmost weight to an applicant's academic background.