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May 23, 2016

Kessel Stelling, Jr.
Chair, Georgia Board of Regents
c/o Mr. Samuel C. Burch
Vice Chancellor Legal Affairs and Secretary to the Board
270 Washington Street, S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Mr. Sterling,

The recently announced retirement of Kennesaw State University (KSU) President Daniel Papp comes as a surprise to the entire KSU community. Filling this position is a tremendous responsibility for the Board of Regents, and your decision will have significant long-term impact the students, staff, and faculty of KSU. We, as representatives of the KSU faculty, write this letter in an effort to urge you and fellow members of the University System of Georgia Board of Regents to faithfully follow, in letter and spirit, the policies of the BOR regarding presidential searches and longstanding norms accepted across higher education in the United States.

The search for the permanent president comes at a pivotal moment for KSU. Under President Papp, KSU experienced tremendous growth in physical plant, student body, faculty, programs, and reputation. Kennesaw State University has come to be recognized as a regional powerhouse, with broader national recognition for myriad initiatives and programs. In recent years, some presidential searches (such as those at the University of Iowa and Mount St. Mary's) have damaged the reputations of institutions who have strayed from their established search processes. It is our hope that the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and the KSU community will work together to ensure an outcome that would allow KSU to continue enhancing the reputation of our tremendous students, programs, and faculty.

Much of KSU's success in the last decade is attributable to the amicable relationship between the faculty, staff, students, and administration. We believe this relationship is a direct result of the meaningful and deep practice of shared governance strongly supported by President Papp. This process of shared governance helps ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in the governance of the university. Although final decisions are of course delegated to administrators (chairs, deans, the provost, and the president), those decisions are informed and facilitated by the shared governance process. The faculty at KSU understand the final selection of a new president is the responsibility and prerogative of the BOR. However, our experience, and the experience of universities around the country, suggests a process that incorporates voices of faculty, staff, students, and community members will result in a more legitimate, and likely more successful, outcome.

Our perspective is that this search, like those of most universities around the country, should draw on long-established practices and guidelines outlined by the American Association of

University Professors (AAUP) Presidential Search Committee Checklist. Though we recognize every circumstance is unique, this guide provides some excellent starting points for both constructing a search committee and guiding its work. A key phrase from the AAUP checklist summarizes our philosophy of the final selection:

“The board, with which the legal authority rests, should either select a name from among those submitted by the faculty committee or should agree that no person will be chosen over the objections of the faculty committee (AAUP).”

Such a process would provide a list of finalists acceptable to the KSU community and the individuals with whom an incoming president would work for years to come, while still acknowledging the BOR’s authority to make a final selection from these finalists who best fits into the vision and priorities of the Regents.

As you are certainly aware, the BOR has an established policy on presidential searches. A key part of that policy, addressing the composition of the institutional search committee, states:

The committee shall be composed of representatives of the faculty, alumni, foundation, students, and the community. Faculty shall compose the largest number of institutional members of the committee. Except as provided below, the chancellor shall name a faculty member as the chair of the institutional search committee (USG Policies, 2.2).

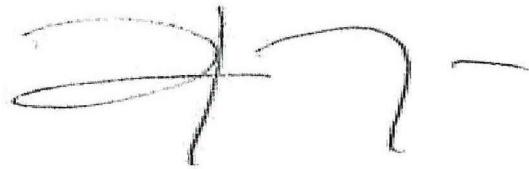
We reviewed the membership of recent presidential search committees at non-research universities in the USG and found the definition of “faculty” has generally been too broad to adequately represent the faculty who work in the day-to-day operations of teaching, mentoring, and research at the university. It appears that many of the “faculty” on these search committees have in fact been administrators, such as deans, chairs, endowed chairs, directors, and other forms of non-regular faculty, which is contrary to the AAUP’s recommendations. In our view, the faculty on this committee should be selected by the faculty, through a process developed by the KSU Faculty Senate.

While there is no single way to select such a committee, it behooves us to suggest one possible path. Assume, for example, a search committee of approximately 17 individuals (including a chair selected by the BOR). It would be appropriate for the committee to be comprised as follows: to include one upper level administrator (such as a vice-president or vice-provost), one department chair (selected by the Chairs Council), one dean (selected by the Deans Council), two students (one undergraduate and one graduate selected by the respective student governments), two staff members (selected by the Staff Senate), a representative of the Alumni Association, a Trustee/Foundation member, and, eight non-administrative faculty members (chosen through a process developed by the Faculty Senate). This would produce a search committee that prioritizes faculty input (as recommended by the AAUP and required by the BOR policy) but does not provide faculty an operational majority. Such a committee composition would reflect the principles of shared governance that have supported the success of our university.

Finally, experiences around the nation suggest that it would be appropriate for the BOR to name more than one finalist for campus visits, to ensure appropriate comparison amongst applicants. Campus and USG stakeholders are best served by interviewing several qualified candidates from among those recommended by the search committee and selected by the BOR. Naming a single “finalist” frequently leads to poor integration of new leadership.

The Faculty Senate is the official body that represents the faculty at Kennesaw State University. It works closely with the AAUP@KSU, an organization comprised of faculty and administrators that works to defend the principles of academic freedom and shared governance. We call on the Board of Regents to consider the long-established principles regarding presidential searches we outline above. It is our hope to not only work with a qualified, experienced, and productive president, but also to avoid the pitfalls that have befallen other universities in recent years. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us as you consider how to construct and implement your selection process for our university’s next president.

Sincerely,



Humayun Zafar
President
Kennesaw State University Faculty Senate
hzafar@kennesaw.edu



Andrew L. Pieper
President
AAUP@KSU
apieper1@kennesaw.edu

Cc: Dan Papp, President, Kennesaw State University
Hank M. Huckabee, University System of Georgia Chancellor
Houston Davis, Executive Vice Chancellor & Chief Academic Officer, University
System of Georgia
W. Ken Harmon, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Kennesaw State
University
Ron Matson, Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs, Kennesaw State University
Victoria Smith-Butler, Chair of USG Faculty Council
Robert M. Scott, President, Georgia Conference of the AAUP