

November 25, 2007

Dr. Benjamin Soukup, Chair
Gallaudet University Board of Trustees
800 Florida Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Dr. Soukup,

In accordance with the instructions from the Board of Trustees, the Task Force to Review the 2006 Presidential Search has completed its charge. Attached you will find our report and attachments documenting the actions, data, and recommendations of the task force.

We faced many challenges in light of the extremely limited amount of time available to the task force to complete our work through careful and valid research to provide evidence-based recommendations.

While we were very pleased to learn that the deadline for the next report to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education has been extended five months, we wish that there had been time for more thorough research. That said, it is our hope that our recommendations will help to guide the Board of Trustees as it moves ahead expeditiously to plan the search for Gallaudet's 10th President.

The Task Force was fortunate that all members worked diligently, even passionately, to obtain factual information. The September 21, 2007 Campus Climate Survey Development and Results report, as part of its permanent climate survey, identified two of five themes as "respect, trust, and fairness" and "institutional communication and information sharing." In spirit of the collective desire of the entire campus community that Gallaudet be reaccredited, the Task Force recommends that this report be shared with the community.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Heppner, Co-Chair

William Sloboda, Co-Chair

On behalf of the members of the Task Force to Review the 2006 Presidential Search

Amy Wilson
Faculty Representative

Mike Kaika
Alumni Representative

Dorothy Wynne
Clerc Center

Jon Mitchiner
Administrative Representative

James Payne
Board of Associates

Noah Beckman
Student Body Government

Steven Titlebaum
Staff Representative

Nancy Kensicki
Retired Faculty

Alesia Howard
Graduate Student Association

Pamela Lloyd-Ogoke
Board of Trustees

Task Force to Review the 2006 Presidential Search Report November 25, 2007

Summary of Actions and Results

The Task Force to Review the 2006 Presidential Search was charged by the Board of Trustees to gather data about:

- The process used for the 2006 presidential search, respecting the need for confidentiality as to the substance of deliberations;
- The concerns about the process used for the 2006 presidential search;
- The process used by the Interim Presidential Search Advisory Committee (IPSAC); and
- Potential changes in the process to be used for the next presidential search.

During the weeks after the Board created the Task Force on September 20, 2007, the Task Force has gathered background information, and held several meetings and a community forum while conducting numerous electronic mail discussions. A key activity was development, distribution and data analysis of a survey of all constituencies of the Gallaudet Community as well as surveys of members of the Board, the 2006 Presidential Search Committee, and the Interim Presidential Search Committee.

This report includes a description of the work of the Task Force, the methodology used in collecting information, the survey results, information from the forum presentation, and recommendations for the future presidential search process. In no particular order, recommendations, based on responses from the two search committees, the Board and the campus community, are that:

Presidential Search Committee (PSC)

1. The Board of Trustees clarify the roles, expectations, anticipated timelines and rules for the PSC prior to beginning the Presidential Search process.
2. The PSC be a manageable size, yet balanced to reflect representation of the community and the Board of Trustees.
3. Consideration be given to having PSC Co-Chairs, such as one board member and one faculty member.
4. Ground rules for the PSC, covering such topics as confidentiality, maintaining an environment for free expression of viewpoints, and the voting process be established at the outset.

Communication

5. More frequent and detailed communication with the campus community about the process, using a variety of media.

Clarity and Consistency

6. Criteria for the position of President be clear, consistent and followed, as in strict adherence to the required qualifications.

Staff Support for PSC

6. The individual or individuals providing staff support for the Search Committee have specific job descriptions.
7. The staff support for the Presidential Search Committee (PSC) be provided by an individual or individuals not connected to the President's office.
8. Background checks and other research be conducted by a search firm or other independent organization to protect confidentiality and to avoid bias
9. The President's Office will minimize the appearance of impropriety of becoming involved in the search process, and will, in fact, have minimal contact with the Search Committee.

Background

In January 2007, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) raised concerns about Gallaudet's compliance with eight of the Commission's 14 accreditation standards and requested the following information under "Effectiveness of shared governance including presidential search process":

The Commission is looking for evidence that governance problems are acknowledged and the university is moving to address them. Explain, in concrete terms, plans to systematically analyze, assess, and improve the functionality of Gallaudet's governance systems so that all segments of the university community feel that they have a meaningful appropriate voice. Also, explain in concrete terms, analysis of lessons learned from the failed presidential search process and plans to modify the next presidential search process so that the outcome is more successful.

On September 20, 2007, the Board of Trustees sent a letter to the campus community announcing the formation of a Task Force to Review the 2006 Presidential Search and the list of charges for the task force. The Task Force was given a deadline to report to the Board by November 20, 2007, since the Board anticipates that it would rely on the report as it prepares its own written report to the MSCHE. The Board also would consider the Task Force's report while developing the process for the next presidential search.

The Board set the structure of the Task Force to contain co-chairs, one selected by the Board of Trustees and the other by the Faculty Senate. To promote diverse membership, the Task Force was comprised of additional members from the Board of Trustees, faculty, administration, staff, alumni, Clerc Center, Board of Associates, Student Body Government, and Graduate Student Association. These additional members were selected by their respective entities for the 12-member task force.

Methodology

To accomplish its charge, the Task Force activities consisted of the following steps:

1. Information Gathering

As the first step, the Co-Chairs, along with one faculty member and one Board member from the Task Force, met with David Armstrong, head of the team writing Gallaudet's MSCHE reports, to

ensure that the Task Force have a clear understanding of what kinds of data were being sought by the MSCHE.

Members of the Task Force reviewed available documentation, including the Gallaudet website postings that narrated its timelines of the search and contained messages from the Board to the campus community and the media. A sample webpage follows: (<http://alumni.gallaudet.edu/enews.asp?ID=8459&Date=4/4/2006>); the IPSAC process information also made publicly available on another webpage: (<http://alumni.gallaudet.edu/enews.asp?ID=9780&Date=11/17/2006>); an October 6, 2006 summarized presentation to the campus community from Dr. Patricia (Tobie) van der Vorm from the Academic Search Consultation Service outlining the steps to be taken in the search process (Attachment A); the Ethics and Confidentiality Statement used by the 2006 PSC and IPSAC; the FSSA coalition information and videos; and newspaper articles, list serves, blogs, and public websites. (Attachments are in a separate email attachment sent along with this report.)

This documentation provided the Task Force with an understanding of the perceptions of the campus community and others regarding the perceived flaws in the 2006 presidential search. One of the Co-Chairs obtained legal advice about whether questions could be asked of these search committee members in light of their confidentiality agreements.

2. Task Force Review of Information

The second step was to share the results of this information gathering at the first meeting of the full Task Force, held on October 24, 2007, with all members present. Among the items discussed were:

- The unavailability of the meeting minutes of the 2006 presidential search committee due to confidentiality agreements signed by PSC members.
- The selection of the six Board members to sit on the PSC.
- The accusation that the President's Office was interfering in the presidential search selection.
- The factors leading to the choosing of the Academic Search Consultation Service of Washington, DC, to work with the PSC and the amount of influence the consultants had on the selection process.
- The lack of transparency during the search process until the selection of the three finalists.
- The question of a finalist not possessing the terminal degree which was a criterion in the position announcement.
- The uncorroborated perceptions of the campus community towards the PSC.

It was agreed that written evidence was imperative to back any recommendations for changes to the presidential search process and to document the Task Force's work for the Board and MSCHE. The Task Force quickly demonstrated shared governance, making plans to conduct a survey of the 2006 presidential search and the interim presidential search, and setting an ambitious schedule of deadlines for tasks, meetings, and a community forum. With only three and a half weeks until the deadline for the task force report, members worked diligently, even passionately, to obtain factual information to meet its goals.

The Task Force recognized the MSCHE's stated observation that the Presidential Search was a failed process and that its charge from the Board to review the 2006 search processes and review potential changes could be used to build a better process in the future. In addition, the Task Force noted that

the September 14, 2007 MSCHE monitoring report had pointed out the dissimilarity between the two presidential searches conducted in 2006. A decision was made by the Task Force to include in its report a brief analysis of the differences between the PSC and IPSAC search processes.

The Task Force also acknowledged that its recommendations must be supported by the evidence it finds. To achieve this, survey questions about the process would be sent to the Board members who served during the presidential search and the members of the PSC, with the understanding that their confidentiality agreements would not be breached since the focus of the survey would be exclusively on the process of the search. The goal was to locate missteps made during the search process and to employ them as the basis for the Task Force's recommendations to improve the next process.

While reading the aforementioned documentation, the Task Force identified concerns from all stakeholders regarding the presidential search process. These concerns served as its basis for creating survey questions, so to help supply missing information about the process. The Task Force then determined which group best could respond to each question. Because the Board and the PSC were more intimately involved with the search process, explicit questions were given to these two groups, such as asking about the criteria for choosing the presidential search consulting firm. Other groups which were surveyed for their perceptions, concerns, and suggestions about the presidential search process were members of the IPSAC, alumni, and current faculty, staff, and students.

3. Creation of the Surveys

The third step was to develop the surveys with the intention that the questions would not be leading or biased, and that they would be open-ended to allow for a greater variety of responses; and they would be about the fairness and inclusiveness of the presidential search. The Task Force fully recognized that while the results from the survey to the campus community could only measure perceptions, said perceptions could assist in pinpointing areas of the search needing improvement.

Discussion centered on the use of the BlackBoard to conduct the larger survey, but it was found that much of the Clerc Center and staff, although they had access, did not use BlackBoard very often; that many alumni, PSC members, and Board members did not have access to the BlackBoard or be familiar with it, and thus, an email sent to the campus community with a link to a secure website separate from the Gallaudet server would be the best choice to enable access, confidentiality, and speed for dissemination and data collection.

A question was raised regarding individuals being suspicious about the confidentiality of a survey distributed by email with a link to a website and that they might be more willing to complete a paper survey. It was determined that the survey would also be made available via download, which could be returned to the Task Force by regular mail or from a different email address.

Task Force representatives selected by each entity would be responsible for review and approval of the questions for their specific groups.

Attached to this report are three surveys that were developed for the PSC and the Board (Attachment B), the IPSAC (Attachment C), and the alumni and the campus community of faculty, staff, and students (Attachment D). Also attached are tables with data and itemized individual comments in answer to these questions (Attachments E, F and G).

The survey was conducted using standard IRB practices. Surveys were sent on Tuesday, October 30, 2007, asking for a response deadline of 8:00 a.m. on November 7, 2007. The alumni were given an added 24 hours to respond, since in the past they had shown displeasure at the speed with which they were asked to respond to requests by the Alumni Office.

After filling out the surveys, people on campus dropped them off at specific locations in Kendall and MSSD, and in a box on Information Desk counter in SAC. Board members were able to mail their responses anonymously to one of the Board members of the Task Force. Assurances about ensuring confidentiality were included in each survey. The campus community survey was translated, printed, and distributed in Spanish for staff members whose first language was not English.

4. Information From Search Firm

The fourth step was for one of the Co-Chairs to request a meeting with Dr. Patricia (Tobie) van der Vorm of Academic Search, to obtain more information about the 2006 presidential search process. Unfortunately, Dr. van der Vorm canceled the November 1, 2007 meeting scheduled with the Co-Chairs and another Task Force member due to family issues and a large backlog of work. She sent them a copy of her presentation she made to the Gallaudet campus community in October 2005 about best practices for Gallaudet's upcoming presidential search. (This was referred to on Page 3 and as Attachment A.)

A Co-Chair subsequently contacted the Academic Search Consultation Service to request that the two consultants who participated in the search process interview with the Task Force. He received an email from the president of the firm stating that Dr. van der Vorm was very busy and that the second consultant was no longer working with the company (Attachment H). Further efforts to obtain information from the company were abandoned due to time constraints.

5. Survey Results

The fifth step was to analyze the survey data. To assist in processing the data analysis expeditiously, one of the Task Force members identified software, Atlas.ti, which was used in conjunction with Excel. The same member of the Task Force trained individuals to assist in the data analysis.

Two days before the survey was to close, an announcement on the Daily Digest encouraged the campus community to complete the survey. Mistakenly, a link to the survey was included in the announcement meaning any individual reading the Daily Digest, including those not part of the campus community, were able to access the link. After the announcement was made, 83 additional surveys were completed. These results were tallied and analyzed, and then compared to the responses received from the campus community before the Daily Digest announcement was made. No significant differences were found between the pre- and post-Daily Digest announcement responses.

All data was analyzed as it came in, and it became clear that responses from the PSC and Board members were specific enough that the respondents might be identifiable by what they shared on the surveys. To assure that the Task Force not share any information that had been provided by any of the respondents that could compromise confidentiality, the Task Force members signed a confidentiality agreement. No compromising material was shared electronically. Materials pertaining to these two groups of surveys were only available in print form at one committee meeting, and these hard copies were then collected and destroyed.

In the interest of attaining consistency and fairness, questions for the Board and PSC were about the definition of the terminal degree, the clarification of their roles and responsibility for serving during the search process, the roles and authority of each group and how the two groups would interact, rules for meetings and how votes were taken, and the levels of confidentiality. Included are the following concerns in summarized form from these two groups:

- The role of the President's office in the selection process.
- The limited knowledge and experience of the academic search firm relative to the community served by Gallaudet University.
- Lack of a clear process or definition established for the search process, such as if or when the requirement for the terminal degree was dropped.
- Timeline being compressed and more time should have been given.
- Need for a specific job description for the person chosen to be the liaison between the BOT and PSC.
- Support staff being involved in researching background information about candidates or about the search firm.
- PSC chair not following Robert's Rules of Order.
- Conflicts of expectations and roles for the BOT and PSC relationship.

The Task Force learned that some PSC members and Board members were apprehensive of documenting their responses in writing, but were willing to talk in person to a Task Force member. The Task Force was unable to conduct live interviews due to time constraints, scheduling difficulties, and challenges with logistics. In order to ensure fairness, the Task Force would have needed to offer the opportunity for live interviews for all parties requesting one.

Responses from campus community groups---faculty, staff, students, and Clerc Center – and responses from alumni showed that both had some similar perceptions about the presidential search process. Responses related to more community involvement topped those suggestions from the campus community and alumni when asked how they believed or suggested the search process could be improved.

An issue that merits consideration in this report is that a person of color, perceived by many to be a top candidate, was not selected for the final circle of candidates. Twenty-three people expressed similar concerns in their responses to this issue that there were not that many candidates of color and that racism was prevalent on campus whereas twenty-two people specifically expressed that racism was not an issue on campus and that the person of color was unqualified for the position.

6. Forum Presentation

The sixth step was to hold a community forum. After a Task Force meeting November 12, 2007 to review the data from the surveys and discuss themes that had emerged, two of the Task Force members immediately began working on a PowerPoint presentation for the forum. They provided drafts to the Task Force members for their input.

The forum was held the next day on November 13, 2007. Co-Chair Sloboda opened the forum by reviewing the task force's charge from the Board and how each member was selected by his or her constituency. He explained that complete information from the survey could not be shared due to a

respect for the confidentiality agreements signed by PSC and Board members. A PowerPoint presentation displayed statistics of completed responses, after which a question-and-answer period followed. Attendance at the forum was very light. Among the questions from the audience were:

- Will the report from the task force be shared with the community?
- Why wasn't an external firm conducting this review?
- Could the interviews and presentations of the three finalists be grouped within a shorter period of time and held in the same location?
- Were there any surprises in the surveys?
- Why were the survey questions for the Board of Trustees different from those for the campus community?
- Why are specific responses from the Board and PSC surveys not being shared as those of the campus community are?

The forum was taped to be made available to the campus community people who were unable to attend.

Task Force Review and Final Report

The Task Force met on November 15, 2007 to review the campus forum results and further discuss survey results. Following this meeting, a three-member writing team worked on a first draft. The task force met again on November 19, 2007 to review and provide additional input for the report. Additional review and discussion were conducted by electronic mail.

The ten recommendations that are listed on the first page of this report are repeated here to include the rationale for each recommendation based on the survey responses from the two search committees, board, and community surveys.

Presidential Search Committee (PSC)

1. The Board of Trustees clarify the roles, expectations, anticipated timelines and rules for the PSC prior to beginning the Presidential Search process.
2. The PSC be a manageable size, yet balanced to reflect representation of the community and the Board of Trustees.
3. Consideration be given to having PSC Co-Chairs, such as one board member and one faculty member.
4. Ground rules for the PSC, covering such topics as confidentiality, maintaining an environment for free expression of viewpoints, and the voting process be established at the outset.

Results of the PSC survey showed that some members of the PSC committee felt they were rushed in their work, unclear of the task charged by the Board, and were not heard by the PSC chairperson. Clarification and having co-chairs will allow for all PSC members to work more cohesively toward common goals, set realistic expectations, and educate the campus community. Survey results also showed concern about the large size of the PSC and the imbalance of representation of constituencies on the committee. Many responses indicated the opinion that

the Board members were overrepresented on the PSC and that they were out of touch with the Gallaudet community.

Communication

5. More frequent and detailed communication with the campus community about the process, using a variety of media.

Many individuals critical of the presidential search process have mentioned the need for it to be more “open” and/or more “transparent.” How these individuals define those two terms may be very different.

In general consent, the Task Force offers the following expectations for transparency of the search process:

- *The timeline for the search process activities are established and publicly available.*
- *The information on the status of the search process is provided regularly and is publicly available.*
- *What is not made available is the individual status and identity of the candidates, the minutes of the meetings, the nature of the meetings, and the collection of information, because the search committee is protecting the privacy of the individual.*

Survey results showed a split in the campus community regarding communication of the search process. Some respondents said there was communication and they understood the process; others disagreed and said there was no clear communication. With no clear agreement on communication, exploring new avenues of providing information – such as vlogs like those initiated by President Davila – are worth considering.

Clarity and Consistency of Required Qualifications

6. Criteria for the position of President be clear, consistent and followed, as in strict adherence to the required qualifications.

In reviewing the publicly available information about the presidential search process, the Task Force found that it was not clear if -- or when -- the terminal degree requirement was dropped, or whether it was even mandatory. The position description offered conflicting detail in that “the successful candidate will (emphasis is ours) possess an earned terminal degree”, yet this sentence is located under the heading “Preferred Qualifications”.

Staff Support for PSC

7. The individual or individuals providing staff support for the Search Committee have specific job descriptions.
8. The staff support for the Presidential Search Committee (PSC) be provided by an individual or individuals not connected to the President’s office.
9. Background checks and other research be conducted by a search firm or other independent organization to protect confidentiality and to avoid bias

10. The President's Office will minimize the appearance of impropriety of becoming involved in the search process, and will, in fact, have minimal contact with the Search Committee.

The preceding four recommendations are based on the results of the Board, PSC, IPSAC, alumni, and campus surveys which clearly document an overwhelming concern about the President's Office conducting improper interference with the presidential search process as the President's office staff had much greater access to the PSC than others on campus. Although the Task Force understands that there is a need for communication between the Board and the President's Office, having a liaison between the President's office and the PSC created an appearance of conflict. The inclusion of a President's Office staff member in PSC meetings, her doing background checks on the search firms and candidates, and the President's direct communication with PSC members and final candidates were all seen as inappropriate.

Conclusion

Although the Task Force was able to fulfill its responsibility with the last three charges, it was unable to obtain a full picture of the process used for the 2006 presidential search because of the constraints of time, inaccessibility to confidential documents, the weak number of survey responses from the PSC and Board groups, and the constraints normally experienced when a review is an internal process rather than an external one.

The information accessible to the Task Force to review the presidential search process was limited to public documents and the willingness of the Board and the PSC to share their knowledge of the process. Although communication from the Board to the Gallaudet community reported on the procedures of the process, the Task Force was unable to ascertain how well that process was followed as we were not privy to any meeting minutes or documents produced by either the Board or the PSC. As above-mentioned, 8 out of 19 Board members responded to the survey (one respondent answered only 5 of the 18 questions) and 6 of the 19 PSC members responded. One Board member told a co-chair that an individual and two others with whom the individual had been in contact felt the survey would break their promise of confidentiality, and thus the individual did not fill out the survey. One PSC member reported that others on the PSC committee were "uncomfortable" and "fearful" of filling out the survey.

The extremely limited time period given to the Task Force made it not possible to conduct interviews with the stakeholders, as requested by some PSC members, which could have gathered more detailed and helpful information about the presidential search process. In addition, internal reviews present a different level of concerns to the stakeholders about what information they can and cannot reveal. Therefore, a consulting firm, being on the outside, could continue our work with more thorough data collection through interviews of the Board and the PSC.

Finally, while this report is not based on a complete investigation of the full dynamics of the presidential search process, the Task Force believes that the Gallaudet community can benefit with what was found and not found, and proceed with an increased knowledge, but also with the concern about what is known, but not voiced.