

ACADEME

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Behind Closed Doors? Reaffirming the Value of Shared Governance

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On Post-Tenure Review
Brigham Young University

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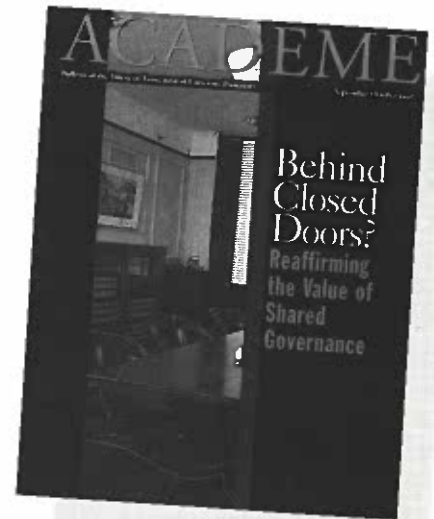
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On the Use of Executive Recruiters in Presidential Searches

Approved for publication by the Association's Committee T on College and University Government in April 1997.

Safeguarding the principle of faculty involvement in the search and selection process for college and university presidents is a necessary part of the "joint effort" in governance that is at the heart of the 1966 *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*. That principle is elaborated upon in the Association's derivative *Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Administrators*, which affirms that "faculty will have a significant role in the selection of academic administrators, including the president, deans, department heads, and chairs."

The faculty role may need reaffirming in light of the increasing retention by governing boards of professional search firms to assist in recruiting academic officers—a practice that appears to be congenial to governing boards that are composed largely of executives with backgrounds in business and management. Although these boards have the ultimate legal responsibility for making contractual arrangements with such firms, it is desirable that they consult with representative members of the faculty early on in the search process before making any decision to employ professional recruiters.

In response to the widespread practice of involving external firms in the presidential search process, this report concerns itself with how best to utilize their particular specialized knowledge and skills in identifying and attracting presidents qualified for leadership of higher education institutions; and how, conversely, to limit their involvement in matters of educational and institutional policy. If utilized properly, executive recruiters can reinforce faculty participation in the search process. When proposals are solicited from these firms, the faculty as well as the board should seek to retain a firm with a well-defined search philosophy and with adequate professional staff resources. It is also important to identify a firm with particular experience in higher education and a track record of involving faculty and other institutional constituencies in the recruiting process. Educational concerns are most likely to be safeguarded by favoring the retention of consultants who have themselves been members of the academic community, or who devote their primary efforts to searches in the relatively uncharted domain of nonprofit institutions, with their distinctive set of val-

ues, benchmarks, and mores that are in large part independent of revenue production. Such consultants should affirm participatory practices consistent with the principles of all applicable AAUP standards. They should appreciate the interdependence of a university's constituencies and the primacy of the faculty in educational matters. Given the nature of executive recruiting staffing practices, the selection of the particular consultant, who will be monitoring all aspects of the search process, should be of central importance when it comes to deciding which firm best meets the needs of the higher education institution.

Faculty participants in the search process are unlikely to disagree with board members on the importance of attracting presidential candidates with fiscal, managerial, entrepreneurial, and political strengths, and with talents in fundraising and dealing with external constituencies. Beyond these qualities, faculty members participating in the search process can ensure recognition of the attributes that are central to the enterprise of learning: educational leadership, dedication to academic freedom, respect for faculty prerogatives, a genuine love of learning, and an abiding tolerance of, indeed even a certain relish for, dissenting opinions. Moreover, members of the faculty, who have made a long-term commitment to the institution and have a unique insight into its history and culture, are in the best position to gauge the educational strengths and weaknesses of their own college or university, including the possible availability of viable internal candidates for the presidency or, conversely, the need for new leadership to invigorate an educational climate that threatens to become insular and stagnant. For this reason, much of the work of executive recruiters should be confined to suggesting ways to maximize the pool of viable candidates, checking references, and recommending screening procedures.

Executive recruiters can be useful to faculties, boards, and other institutional constituencies by making them aware of the advantages and disadvantages of certain interview formats, venues, or forums; by undertaking the routine processing of credentials; by informing them of relevant state and federal employment statutes; by fielding candidate inquiries; by supplementing the pool of

presidential prospects with in-house databases of higher education candidates and soliciting nominations from all segments of the population through a network of higher education contacts; and, ultimately, by conducting background checks of finalists. Hiring on the executive level has its own specialized lore, its own research studies, its own protocols, about which most faculty members and administrators do not have sufficient knowledge. For example, if the professional research is to be credited, even the particular order in which finalists are invited to campus for on-site interviews can have an effect on the selection process.

The professional recruiter can help streamline the process, but members of the faculty must insist on the inclusiveness of the endeavor, even at the expense of efficiency, in order to ensure a salutary outcome. This means working for strong faculty representation on either a joint faculty/trustee committee that both

identifies and narrows down the pool of candidates or, alternatively and less desirably, on a separate faculty committee with a more restricted charge. This representation should consist of individuals who have been designated by the faculty to solicit opinions from the faculty as a whole, thereby broadening the mandate for the candidate who is ultimately selected to become president of the institution. However the search is conducted, the names of finalists who visit the campus should be made known to the faculty as well as to other institutional constituencies, who should be provided with an opportunity to interact with them and furnish recommendations about their candidacies.

Informing all relevant decisions about the details of the search process should be the conviction that the efforts of executive recruiters supplement, but do not supplant, those of the board and the faculty.

Francis Marion University

Statement Recommending Sanction

Committee T, reporting to the Eighty-Third Annual Meeting in June 1997, presented the following statement concerning Francis Marion University (South Carolina).

The investigating committee found the decision-making procedures as set forth in Francis Marion University's governance documents to be in essential harmony with the Association's *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*. In the committee's view the basic structures of governance, including a recently established Faculty Senate, provide adequate forums for members of the faculty to express their collective judgment on educational matters and on the administration of the university. Despite the existence of these governance structures, however, and despite President Lee A. Vickers's stated adherence to a philosophy of governance that emphasizes "partnership" and "cooperation and collaboration with and among the faculty," the investigating committee found that the administration has failed to pay adequate respect to the faculty's judgment in those matters where the faculty has significant responsibility. The faculty has reacted with increasing protest, complaining that the administration has attempted to bypass faculty committees, to preordain the results of important questions, to treat the faculty's proposals and legisla-

tion as having little weight, and to disdain agreed-upon procedures. The investigating committee found that such a pattern does exist.

Faculty members have complained about the action taken by President Vickers's predecessor (but with which he concurred) to remove a provost from office without any faculty consultation. They have expressed concerns about the adequacy of the faculty role in searches for academic administrators, including the search that resulted in the appointment of President Vickers over the faculty's objections. They have complained about the president's assuming tighter control over both the curriculum and the development of faculty personnel policies, especially the standards and criteria for evaluating faculty performance. They have objected to the administration's unwillingness to consult meaningfully with the Senate's Budget Subcommittee in the preparation of the budget and in the determination of short- and long-range priorities for allocating institutional resources. They have also criticized the president's having unilaterally instituted a major change in the university's administrative and academic structure.

Behind this heightened presidential control lies the evident emergence of a corporate model of governance, a development not unique to Francis Marion University. The corporate ap-