

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL FACULTY SENATE MEETING
FEBRUARY 12, 2020
Merten Hall 1201

Senators present: Alan Abramson, Dominique Banville, Christine Barthold, Jim Bennett, Alok Berry, Lisa Billingham, Virginia Blair, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Meagan Call Cummings, Carol Cleaveland, Richard Craig, Shannon Davis, Betsy DeMulder, Stephanie Dodman, Michael Gilmore, Tamara Harvey, Dimitrios Ioannou, Larry Kerschberg, Tim Leslie, Kumar Mehta, Linda Monson, Maury Peiperl, Daniel Polsby, Karen Reedy, Keith Renshaw, Esperanza Roman-Mendoza, Zachary Schrag, Joe Scimecca, Solon Simmons, Suzanne Slayden, Rebecca Sutter, David Wong, Masoud Yasai, John Zenelis, Jie Zhang.

Senators absent: Ali Andalibi, Ann Ardis, Kenneth Ball, Sonia Ben Ouagrham-Gormley, Henry Butler, Lloyd Cohen, James Conant, Rick Davis, Christy Esposito Smythers, Daniel Garrison, Mark Ginsberg, Anne Holton, Aditya Johri, Brett Josephson, Jenna Krall, Germaine Louis, Daniel Menascé, Alpaslan Özerdem, Robert Pasnak, Pierre Rodgers, Mark Rozell, Catherine Sausville, Cristiana Stan, Donglian Sun, Kun Sun, Susan Trencher, Andy Yao.

Visitors present: LaShonda Anthony, Director, Academic Integrity, University Life; Lester L. Arnold, Sr., Vice President, HR/Payroll; Joan Bristol, Associate Professor, History and Art History; Vincent Chanethom, Assistant Professor, Modern and Classical Languages; Rector Tom Davis; Ed Dittmeier, University Auditor; Kim Eby, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development; Kimberly Ford, Personnel Project Manager, Provost Office; Tim Gibson, Associate Professor, Communication; Cameron Harris, Instructor, School of Business; Virginia Hoy, Term Faculty, English, BIS; Matt Karush, Professor, History and Art History; Allison Landsberg, Professor, History and Art History/Cultural Studies Program; Jenny Leeman, Professor, Modern and Classical Languages; Jamie Lester, Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, College of Humanities and Social Sciences; J. Samaine Lockwood, Associate Professor, English; Susan Lydick, Adjunct Faculty, Rehabilitation Science; Clifton Murray, Director of Talent Acquisition, Human Resources; Cassidy Pollard, Student; Edward Rice, Board of Visitors; Cathy Saunders, Term Professor, English; Jessica Scarlata, Associate Professor, English; Ellen Serafini, Assistant Professor, Modern and Classical Languages; Matthew Smith, Director of Accreditation, Provost Office; Dietra Y. Trent, Chief of Staff, President's Office; Katheryn Zupan, Graduate Admissions.

The venue of the special meeting was changed to Merten Hall 1201 because of safety concerns that lead to evacuation and closure of Robinson Building by emergency responders.

I. Call to Order: Chair Shannon Davis called the meeting to order at 3:07 p.m. She thanked everyone who helped make a rapid transition in venues by communicating the change in venue as well as and those who got the room ready for our meeting.

The purpose of this meeting is to have an open conversation with Rector Davis on topics of interest to the Faculty Senate.

Only business stipulated in the call to the special meeting may be transacted.

II. Conversation with Rector Davis

Chair Shannon Davis introduced Rector Tom Davis. Twice a year, Rector Davis meets with Faculty Senate to answer questions, share BOV's priorities; and obtain faculty perspectives to convey to the Board.. There were several meetings on Friday, February 7, 2020:

- Presidential Search Committee (1:00 – 3:00 pm) HUB Ballroom. The first part of the meeting (1:05-1:50 pm) took public comments on the presidential search process. The second part of the meeting (1:50-3:00 pm) discussed of Community Engagement in the Presidential Search process. The Presidential Search Committee recommended that the Board of Visitors follow the spirit and letter of the *Faculty Handbook*, particularly Section 1.2.5, to provide opportunities for the General Faculty to meet with presidential finalists.
- Special Meeting of the Board of Visitors (3:00 – 4:00 pm) Discussion of the Presidential Search Committee's recommendation on the engagement of the General Faculty and other community members in the Presidential Search Process.
The BOV affirmed the recommendation with a vote.

The Presidential search is ongoing; Faculty Senators are invited to ask questions of Rector Davis.

Rector Davis:

Interim President Anne Holton is exceeding expectations.

The search committee completed the interview process today.

Faculty has conveyed strong opposition to absence of public session with finalists. BOV is discussing on how to engage faculty. Public sessions jeopardize standing and jobs of candidates who are currently successful university leaders. Even in confidential private sessions, such as at the time of hiring President Cabrera – there was leak of identity prior to public announcement.

He has discussed with Shannon Davis (co-chair of the Presidential Search Committee) about how best to engage faculty in the process while staying attractive for good candidates. The discussion is about meeting a larger representative group of faculty because public sessions are too risky. Neither BOV, nor candidates, nor faculty are keen about online townhalls. That said, he does not know what the answer will be, but is committed to engaging the faculty in the search process.

He shared that pool of candidates is strong and diverse. There is not a rigid timeline, but interviews are likely to happen in the next few weeks.

How do you define “a representative group”?

Rector Davis: He is in discussions with Shannon to define this, and hopes that it would be a group that is as large as the meeting room. He emphasized that the BOV believes it has a fiduciary responsibility to find the best president for the university.

Chair Davis noted the search committee has completed its interviews of candidates and submitted its recommendations to the BOV. Following the completion of the assigned task, the search committee is no longer active.

Faculty here would like to question the candidates and would like to get really good information from individuals who have worked with the candidates. Is the search firm getting information from candidates' current workplace?

Rector Davis: BOV staff has already done some of that. Additionally, BOV will be seeking out much more information and conducting background checks to ensure that mistakes are not made.

Will faculty receive names in advance so that they can research the candidates?

Rector Davis: He personally has no issue with it as long the information is guaranteed to be held in confidence. He has to consult with the Board, and there is a lot of concern about leaks jeopardizing the final stages of the search.

What happens if there are three candidates and one does not want to be vetted by faculty?

Rector Davis: That would present a problem. BOV could set the conditions as it progresses to the next stage. He shared that the recommended pool of candidates is a very strong pool and BOV takes obligation to find the best person seriously.

If a finalist is not comfortable meeting with faculty, that person may not be the best person because she or he is not confident about serving as president.

Rector Davis: The reason why the condition of meeting with faculty is introduced at the end is to ensure we have the broadest and strongest possible pool to select finalists from. There was almost a unanimous vote by search committee to uphold *Faculty Handbook*. Unlike in the past when BOV wanted to significantly dilute the *Faculty Handbook*, he believes in shared governance. At the same time, he does not want to constraint future board.

Rector Davis: Diversity has been part of strategy from the outset.

Shannon Davis: Faculty voice was much smaller in previous presidential search committees. There are differences in ways this search committee has throughout tried to engage the community in the process. Faculty Senate can constructively engage in assisting in transition with new president and learn how to work together and gain trust in both directions.

Rector Davis: A lot of changes have been made in the current presidential search process, and it will affect how this place operates. The BOV has wanted to and supported keeping faculty involved.

What are the top characteristics you are looking for?

Rector Davis:

1. Help build diversity – we have diversity of student body but not faculty
2. Technology-oriented, we are looking to strengthen relationship with Amazon
3. To represent us well to the Virginia General Assembly and major contributors
4. Must have academic credentials to lead a R1 university.

Rector Davis: We pride ourselves for the large number of first generation college students. We need to strengthen financial aid and assistance to our students, for which we need to raise money. We also need to get a fair shake from legislature.

We need to raise a lot more money for all the good things faculty can do. New president needs to be able do this.

Rector Davis: Under President Cabrera the endowment doubled, and it could be doubled again. We are proudest of our faculty who need to be supported lot more.

Rector Davis:

Thanks everyone for coming to this special meeting and looks forward to continuing the conversation.

Chair Davis: It is imperative for us who are asking BOV to trust them to uphold the *Faculty Handbook*. They have affirmed that they will uphold the Faculty Handbook. They are asking us if we can live up to our obligation to respect confidentiality, in order for administration and especially for the BOV to trust us. So, if we have a group of us to meet with the finalists we are committing to uphold their trust in us. BOV has empowered Rector Davis to make the decision and communicate to us, so be on the lookout for that email.

III. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kumar Mehta
Secretary