

MARQUETTE PROTOCOL FOR CONDUCTING DEAN SEARCHES

College deans occupy positions of great responsibility, charged not only with representing their colleges and the university in many settings, but with providing intellectual leadership for their faculty and, above all, guaranteeing the quality of students' education. In order to identify candidates capable of such work, the search committee, provost, and president must closely coordinate their efforts, in order to insure that the president, who has ultimate responsibility for making the appointment, feels confident that all relevant factors have been considered and that the appointee fits the university's expectations.

The following protocol describes the steps Marquette follows in its dean searches, with special attention to the respective roles of search committee, provost, and president. In general, the search committee handles the detailed evaluation of candidates' qualifications, the provost coordinates and oversees the overall search process and consults regularly with the president and committee chair throughout the search. The final decision on all dean appointments rests with the president.

Preparing for the search

Choosing a search committee chair and members

The provost appoints a committee chair, in consultation with the sitting dean, and with input from faculty, other members of the provost team, and the president as needed. Committee chairs need to be highly respected as faculty in their colleges, experienced, reliable, discreet, and discriminating. After a faculty member agrees to chair the committee, the provost invites the other committee members, again with input from current deans, the committee chair, faculty, provost team members, advancement (for alumni members and trustees), and the president as needed.

The provost should choose search committee members with an eye to expertise, experience, effectiveness, willingness to invest the time, and representativeness. The committee must be able to speak to the various intellectual interests of the college, and be considered credible in the judgments it will be asked to make.

As a matter of course, each dean search committee should include college faculty members, a faculty member from outside the college chosen from a list of nominees proposed by the Academic Senate, one or two alumni, a trustee, and a dean from another college. Including alumni and a trustee creates an opportunity for engaging them in meaningful work, and often provides a useful outside perspective. The dean representative provides first-hand knowledge about the day-to-day general demands of the position, as well as the nature of deans' work with alumni, fellow deans, and other administrators. The student representative should normally be a senior student from the college selected by the search committee chair in consultation with department chairs and college leadership.

Staffing the committee

The searches work best when the committee members are free to focus upon the work of evaluation and discussion, and are relieved of the many logistical details that come with a search. A provost or college staff assistant will be assigned to handle tasks such as taking minutes, scheduling rooms and meetings, and handling hotel and flight reservations. If needed, the provost may also identify administrative staff to help the committee chair manage relations with the search firm and with the candidates.

Gathering information on stakeholder interests

Before drafting the job description and beginning the actual search, the committee should open itself to ideas and opinions from faculty and other stakeholders, whether by public forum, e-mail, or personal conversations with the president, provost, current dean, and Academic Senate. For professional schools such as engineering and business, consultation with alumni and professionals can also prove helpful.

Charging the committee

The provost and president should work together in preparing a written charge for the search committee, which goes out over the provost's signature. That charge should describe the key qualifications dean candidates are expected to meet, the timeline for the search, and the work product being requested: a written evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each finalist.

The president and provost should attend one of the first meetings with the committee, in order to thank the members for their participation, describe a tentative timeline for the process, encourage them to think on behalf of the whole college in their deliberations (and not just as representatives of particular interests), give every candidate a full and fair hearing, listen carefully and respectfully to one another's opinions, and maintain strict confidentiality.

The committee should not rank the candidates. The act of ranking can create problems if the "first" candidate is offered the job and refuses, and a perfectly acceptable "second" candidate is offered the job and accepts, only to learn later that he or she was the "second choice." The committee's role is to advise the provost and president whether, from their perspective, each candidate is highly acceptable, acceptable, or unacceptable, and to identify strengths and weaknesses for each.

Choosing a search firm

Universities now routinely employ search firms to conduct dean appointments, in order to gather a better pool of candidates, guarantee a back-channel through which candidates can confidentially explore a position, provide more expert comparison of candidate strengths and weaknesses, and relieve

faculty search committees of correspondence and scheduling tasks. Normally, the provost chooses any search firm used, in consultation with the president and, if possible, the committee chair.

Training the committee members

Before the committee begins reviewing any dossiers, it should meet with William Welburn, the associate provost for diversity and inclusion, to discuss strategies for encouraging diversity in the applicant pool, and with the vice president for mission and ministry to discuss the role of the Jesuit, Catholic mission of Marquette in guiding their deliberations. Similarly, before interviewing candidates, the committee should meet with the general counsel and the director of human resources to insure that it adheres to legal requirements and best business practices in its interviewing.

Drafting the job description

The committee drafts the job description, with input and feedback from the provost and president, and in collaboration with the search firm. The committee may choose to start with descriptions developed in previous dean searches in that or another college, and begin to amend it. The search firm provides invaluable advice about what candidates will be looking for, and how to position the university in order to attract strong candidates.

The act of writing the draft job description is an important first step in helping the committee work together as a group, and it allows important questions to surface (e.g., how much weight do we want to give a candidate's scholarly record?) so that they might be addressed early in the process in collaboration with the provost and president.

Conducting the search

Advertising the position

The search firm database is the largest single source of applicants, typically containing hundreds of names of candidates who can then be screened according to the criteria that the committee establishes. The committee members should also recognize that part of their role is using their own professional organizations and networks, as well as the network of AJCU schools, to identify potential candidates that the search firm might approach.

Developing slates of candidates

The search firm representative working with the university should meet with the committee chair, provost, and president before beginning to screen candidates, in order to understand their expectations for the position and the particular criteria that will matter most to them. As the search firm identifies potential candidates and completes its preliminary research on them, it begins to share with the

committee slates of candidates it has developed from its own research or from applications or nominations it has received. The search firm representative reviews each qualified candidate, offers initial impressions, and answers questions from the committee. The committee then deliberates further on its own and decides whether any of these candidates would be worth an airport or phone interview.

Conducting phone or airport interviews

After it has identified at least three or four promising candidates, the committee should begin to arrange airport or phone interviews. (The staff does the actual work of arranging these meetings.) It should share with the provost and president the CVs and letters of any candidates chosen for a preliminary interview, so that those senior officers might suggest any questions that they might want posed to a particular candidate.

These preliminary interviews are typically one to two hours long. In preparation, the committee decides on key questions it wants to ask, and identifies members who will take the lead in asking those questions. When conducting the interviews, the committee should recognize that, beyond its immediate task of evaluating the credentials of the candidates, it is also trying to encourage candidates' interest in and enthusiasm for working at Marquette.

After the interview, the committee deliberates on what it has heard and begins to decide whether that candidate might be a possible finalist. While the committee is conducting its first airport or phone interviews, the search firm continues to develop other slates, which often include candidates who have more recently expressed an interest in the position. In order to use its time and money well, the committee should expect to conduct no more than 8 to 10 preliminary interviews in most searches. It should endeavor to eliminate marginally acceptable candidates through its earlier deliberations.

If any committee members ask questions about the possible appropriateness of any of the candidates emerging as possible finalists in the search, the committee chair should consult with the provost and president. Throughout this process, the search firm representative will communicate directly with the committee chair, who in turn will meet regularly with the provost, and if needed, the president, to update the search's progress.

Recommending finalists for campus interviews

After it has conducted its phone and airport interviews, the committee identifies a short list from which it chooses as many as three finalists for campus interviews. With permission from the provost, the committee can invite more than three candidates, but only when it is absolutely convinced that a fourth or fifth candidate is equally competitive.

After recommending its finalists but before inviting anyone to campus, the committee should meet with the provost and president to affirm that all parties consider those finalists viable.

The committee should also maintain a short list of 3-5 other highly regarded candidates. It should inform the candidates on that short list that while Marquette does not immediately plan to interview them, they are considered active candidates for the position. All other applicants should receive letters at this point, thanking them for their interest and saying that they are no longer being considered for the deanship.

Bringing candidates to campus

The staff member and administrator assigned to the committee work with the chair to begin arranging a two-day campus visit. The committee should follow the template developed in previous dean searches (which the provost's office will provide), which specifies all the stakeholders with whom the candidate must meet, the forums and venues needed, the numbers of people to be invited to meals, and the ideal order of the meetings (e.g., search committee early on and near the end of the visit, provost last when possible).

Conducting reference checks

As soon as the committee identifies the finalists being brought to campus, the search firm begins a more detailed reference check on each. The committee chair should make sure that all candidates understand that coming to campus is a public event that will be noticed in the press or on the Internet, and that the candidate should inform key people on their home campus before Marquette announces his or her visit.

Once news of a candidate coming to campus becomes public, committee members should begin to use their personal and professional contacts to find out whatever they can about the finalists through sources available to them, as well as contacting references listed by the candidate. Before doing so, the committee should ask all candidates whether there are any specific people they do not want us to contact, and the committee should honor that request.

Making an offer

Evaluating finalists

Within one week after the last finalist has visited campus, the committee should meet to compare their impressions of the candidates, discuss the evaluations they have received from others, and hear the results of the search firm reference checks and other inquiries committee members have made. Before beginning its deliberations, the committee should receive all the available written feedback from stakeholders who have met with the candidates or attended any of the public forums. The committee should treat all such feedback as confidential.

Once this deliberation is complete, the committee chair should prepare a brief summary of the committee's discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate, and evaluate each

candidate as highly acceptable, acceptable, or unacceptable. That report is shared with the provost and the president.

Consulting with the search committee

After the committee has completed its review, the provost and president should schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss the committee's evaluations of each candidate in more detail. This meeting offers an important opportunity to ask very specific questions about each candidate and probe areas where there may be disagreement or uncertainty in the committee's evaluation.

The provost should also follow up with the search firm representative in a similar manner, asking questions, testing concerns raised by others, and inviting the representative's own reflections on a candidate. The president may also choose to participate in these conversations with the search firm, either with the provost or on his own.

Consulting with the president

It is normal, during the on-campus interviews, for the provost and president to talk informally about first impressions of the candidates. After the committee completes its work, however, it is crucial for the provost and president to discuss the candidates in depth, so that they might choose a candidate whom they both support. The provost will normally take the responsibility for working out the details of any offer and making the actual offer.

Throughout the search process, regular contact between the provost and the president, and between them and the committee chair, is crucial. The finalists discussed at the end of the process should all be realistic and serious aspirants to the position. The mode of communication should be dialogic, with committee chair, provost, and president all feeling free to ask questions, and expecting that their concerns will receive a full and fair hearing.

Addressing mission questions in the hiring process

The search committee should make sure that it talks explicitly about the Jesuit, Catholic mission of Marquette with each candidate, and emphasizes the importance of mission leadership as a factor in our evaluation and choice of deans. Candidates should be told that this topic will be raised by a variety of groups they meet in the course of a campus interview. All finalists are asked to meet with Stephanie Russell, Marquette's vice president for mission and ministry, during the campus interview. While this interview is in part informative for candidates, it is also designed to help test the potential fit between a candidate and Marquette. Dean candidates of all faiths are welcome at Marquette, insofar as they can contribute to the university's mission and serve as mission leaders in their colleges. The questions asked during the interview address the candidates' (1) familiarity with Catholic and Jesuit higher education, (2) pedagogy and philosophy of education, (3) understanding of research as a constitutive element of the

mission, (4) understanding of Jesuit universities as agents for promoting the common good, (5) ability to work collaboratively with colleagues in the college and at the level of senior leadership, and (6) comfort with questions of faith and transcendence in the university community and student learning experience.