

WASHBURN UNIVERSITY OF TOPEKA
BOARD OF REGENTS
MINUTES
August 18, 2022

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Buhler called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. in the Kansas Room of the Memorial Union on the Washburn University campus.

II. Roll Call

Present were: Mr. Beck, Ms. Buhler, Mr. Dietrick, Mr. Hulse, *Mr. Padilla, Mr. Romero, *Mr. Schmidt and Mrs. Sourk.

* Participated via Zoom protocol.

III. Approval of Minutes of the July 28, 2022 meeting

It was moved by Regent Beck and seconded by Regent Dietrick to approve the Minutes of the July 28, 2022 meeting with one correction. The final word in Item VI.D. should be “President”, not “Chair”. Motion passed.

IV. Introduction of Witt Kieffer

V. Executive Session

Chairperson Buhler moved (at 4:10 p.m.) to recess into executive session until 4:20 p.m. to discuss personnel issues of non-elected personnel. Regent Beck seconded. The Board recessed into executive session. The Board reconvened in open session at 4:19 p.m.

VI. Discussion and Potential Action Items

A. Approval of Agreement for Interim President

Regent Beck moved to approve Marshall Meek as Interim President, Regent Sourk seconded. Motion was approved. The Board offered its Congratulations to Meek.

B. Appointment of Additional Presidential Search Committee Members

Chairperson Buhler started the discussion of additional search committee members, there are three potential additions to round out the group. These will be the final additions to the search committee. Dr. Bobbe Mansfield, Angela Valdivia, and Allison Sadler. There are twenty-nine members who have graciously agreed to serve, good representations of our community. Regent Sourk questioned the need for additional committee members – whether it would be a barrier. There was

discussion about the number of committee members and whether it is difficult to manage a large group. There were comments in support of additional members, noting the importance of including all campus constituents and groups being properly represented.

Chairperson Buhler moved and Regent Hulse seconded to approve the addition of the three new search committee members. Motion was approved with one regent dissenting. Chairperson Buhler thanked the committee members for being willing to serve.

VII. Presentation and Discussion with WittKieffer

Zachary Smith and Sandra Chu of WittKieffer introduced themselves and explained the process of developing the presidential profile. Through listening sessions, talking to constituents across campus, they are learning about the institution and gathering input on the hopes and dreams for the future of Washburn University. They will then consolidate the information into a leadership profile to share with candidates, which will include a job description, background information on the institution, its programs, and points of pride.

After Labor Day, they plan to launch into market. They will do broad outreach to candidates, sometimes contacting 2,000 to 3,000 people. They have conversations to see if candidates are aligned with the opportunity. The latter part of October, the search committee will review the candidates. It will be a four-hour meeting where they will narrow the list to the top ten to twelve candidates, then conduct a series of first round interviews with the committee. At the end of that day, the search committee will decide who to forward to the Board. Next is a series of interviews with the Board. The Board will then decide who they select. WittKieffer will conduct reference checks, media checks, and other work behind the scenes during that time.

Finalists will interview in early December, wrap up before winter holidays. For a start date, January 1 is unlikely; WittKieffer will emphasize to candidates that we want them to start as soon as they are able. They expect an average of sixty applicants and noted that a quality pool, not a large size of pool, is most important.

They noted that our campus has a solid financial footing. It is a beautiful campus with a great community. It is always difficult to follow a long serving president. The campus is excited about the future so it is a good story and it is a great opportunity for someone.

Zach Smith explained that a closed or confidential search makes a difference for sitting presidents who are applying. He's done both open and closed. An open search can put people in a compromising position if they don't get the job. A closed search will have a different candidate pool, likely a greater number of seasoned president applicants.

The Regents asked if there were glaring concerns that arose in the listening sessions. Smith said enrollment was noted but that is a national challenge, so not a concern. Similar concerns on campuses, people want more money. There is the dynamic around a 25-year president as people might be hesitant to follow as it takes special skills to honor history and move forward.

Regent Padilla said he looks forward to increasing and growing collaboration. He said it is important to make sure candidates have a feel for the city of Topeka and a desire to engage as much as they can with the city.

The Regents then gave feedback as to professional and personal qualities of candidates, the preferred and required priorities in 1-2 and in 3-5 years, and points of pride.

- Address enrollment aggressively.
- Relationship with faculty senate.
- Intergovernmental relations, with city and with the legislative. Capable and qualified to present to those entities.
- Highlight law school, new law building.
- Candidates who has been innovative.
- Risk tolerance, experience with calculated risk.
- Washburn has a long history of being inclusive, from its founding to the current faculty, staff, and students.
- Washburn has been innovative, like at Tech, and needs to continue, which would add to financial stability.
- Brand and market Washburn.
- Be an actively engaged member of Washburn and the Topeka community and be a leader of higher education.
- The person should reflect personality of campus and students.
- Opportunity for growth in minority populations. Inclusion in lots of different things. Hone in on discrete populations.
- Appreciation and drive to see Tech expand.
- Sell Washburn to the state.
- Recruiting students who aren't traditionally coming to Washburn. A third of students in Kansas don't attend any institution. It takes need-based scholarships. First generation students need continuum. Acknowledge the increase in Hispanic births. Seventy-five percent of the population in Kansas lives in cities, it's no longer a rural state.

- Opening the door wider for opportunities to students in Topeka.

Chairperson Buhler reminded everyone of the Witt Kieffer email address and encouraged people to submit their feedback.

Buhler thanked Regent Schmidt for his service on the Board as this is likely his last meeting.

It was moved by Regent Dietrick and seconded by Regent Sourk to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Cynthia Holthaus
Assistant Secretary, Board of Regents