To: University of Richmond Staff
From: USAC Executive Committee
Date: November 20, 2020
Subject: Response to Presidential Search Committee Inquiries

Dear Constituents,

We appreciate the outpouring of questions and concern surrounding the composition of the Presidential Search Committee. As USAC representatives, we aim to listen and uplift your questions and concerns, and recommend appropriate resolution. Since the search committee was announced on October 14, 2020, we have received many messages from constituents across the University, as well as eight web submissions. These web submissions are enclosed for your review. Specifically, the web submissions and feedback from constituents address the lack of staff representation and from non-managerial positions on the search committee. A list of the search committee members is also enclosed.

Regarding the role of USAC and the Presidential Search Committee
Mark Stanton (Chair, USAC) was contacted by Ann Lloyd Breeden (Vice President and Secretary, Board of Trustees) to provide a list of staff nominees for the search committee. Mark then contacted USAC representatives for a slate of nominees and subsequently presented the names of 54 staff members to the Board. Of the staff members who were selected to serve on the search committee (John Hardt, Gil Villanueva, and Terry Heilman Sylvester, alumni representative), only Gil Villanueva was put forth by USAC. Comparatively, Faculty Senate provided the names of the three faculty on the search committee.

We have since shared these concerns (as noted above) with upper leadership (Dave Hale and Jeff Legro) and the Board of Trustees. In these communications, USAC asked the board for an additional staff member to be added to the search committee. This request was denied. A formal response from Paul Queally (Rector, Board of Trustees) is enclosed, and a timeline of events is found below for additional context.

A note from the USAC Executive Committee
Your trust in our leadership is important to us. If our role in the selection of the Presidential Search Committee has faltered that trust, we sincerely apologize. We have learned a lot throughout this process and have recommendations and suggestions for future USAC members going through the presidential search process. We also acknowledge the larger landscape: one where staff members often feel like an unequal stakeholder at the University. We commit to continue advocating for a more equitable and inclusive community for all staff members.

Sincerely,

USAC Executive Committee
Mark Stanton, Chair
Jessica Washington, Vice Chair
Jennifer O'Donnell, Secretary/Treasurer
TIMELINE OF EVENTS

September 24, 2020
Mark receives an email from Ann Lloyd Breeden (Vice President and Secretary, Board of Trustees) with a request to provide a slate of staff nominees by October 2, 2020.

September 25, 2020
Mark sends an email to council members asking to provide a list of staff nominees by Oct. 2.

September 25-October, 2, 2020
Mark receives the names of 54 staff nominations from different council members. Council members provided a list of names on their own and/or solicited feedback from constituents.

October 2, 2020
Mark provides the list of nominees to Ann Lloyd.

October 6, 2020
Mark speaks with Ann Lloyd via the phone. Asks following two questions:

1. How is the board selecting staff members for the search committee? Is there transparency as to the selection process?
2. Will there be a public request for nominations?

Answers: selections will be made with an eye toward the collective. It was presumed all nominees submitted appropriately represented staff as a whole. The board will not break down specifics as to why someone was selected. There will not be a public request for nominations, just those solicited via USAC and Faculty Senate.

October 14, 2020
The search committee is announced to the campus community via email from Rector Paul Queally and Vice Rector Susan Quisenberry.

October 16, 2020
USAC writes to the Board via Ann Lloyd requesting an additional non-managerial staff member be added to the committee, and asks for additional information about the composition of the last presidential search committee.

October 19, 2020
Mark speaks with Ann Lloyd on the phone. She advises it was explicitly stated during the last presidential search that the composition of that committee was not to set a precedent. The Board of Trustees selected a name from the list provided by USAC, and everyone on the list was assumed to represent the best interests of the university.
October 20, 2020
Ann Lloyd provides a list of members from the 2014-15 Presidential Search Committee. Also, she connects Mark with the search firm Spencer Stuart to set up a meeting with USAC and assist with Staff Town Halls.

October 21, 2020
USAC writes the Board via Ann Lloyd requesting responses on the following questions:

1. Can you confirm our initial request for an additional staff member and the web submissions from staff (attached) were communicated to the Board of Trustees?
2. On our call, you mentioned the Rector made clear in 2014-15 that the composition of that search committee was not precedent setting. Do you have that in writing anywhere?
3. Would the Board be willing to issue a brief written response to staff’s request?

Ann Lloyd confirms our request for an additional staff member to be added was communicated to the Board.

October 23, 2020
Ann Lloyd provides language from rector RE that committee’s composition not setting the precedent for the next committee’s composition. (see below)

It is from a May 2014 letter from then-Rector Chuck Ledsinger to the leadership of what was then the University Faculty Council (precursor to Faculty Senate) reporting the faculty appointments to the 2014-15 search committee:

“Since each Rector should have the latitude to form a Search Committee according to his or her best judgment and in response to particular circumstances at the time a Committee is needed, we should not consider the composition of this committee—particularly in number or allocation of seats—a precedent for future Presidential Search Committees.”

October 27, 2020
Rector Paul Queally responds to staff request via letter, denying request for an additional member (enclosed).
Web Submissions
The following web submissions regarding the composition of the Presidential Search Committee were received October 14-27, 2020.

**Idea/Rationale:** What process was used to determine what staff members would sit on the committee and ultimately represent the staff for the Presidential Search? Typically, there is a very public open call for staff representation and it feels like this was not the case this time. It is concerning that a VP and AVP are the people representing the staff and a missed opportunity for mid-level staff to have some representation.

**Idea/Rationale:** Hi there. It would be great to see some USAC/Staff representation on the new Presidential search committee. Would it be possible to contact the committee and request a staff appointee? If I’m not mistaken- we are not represented here. I’m not sure a VP counts as “staff”- they are more administration level, and so far removed from regular staff needs that I don’t believe that they represent us in this case. I understand the classification may be there- but if the intent is to offer staff representation, I do not believe a VP can represent staff in this way. We have had staff members represent USAC on past presidential searches (I believe Andy Gurka was utilized multiple times). Perhaps pulling from Campus Operations would be a great way to make the nearly 500 staffers feel like they are important to the process and a vital part of this university community. Might I recommend Rich Thomas, Megan Johnston, David Donaldson, Brittany Schaal, Melissa Comstock, Joe Wolff, or Mark Beatty as a potential staff representative? Representation matters.

**Idea/Rationale:** USAC should explain the process for how staff nominations were solicited and submitted for the presidential search committee? I know the USAC bylaws allow for the executive committee to make direct recommendations for university committees, but it is important for USAC to be transparent about their process for this important committee. How many names were submitted? How were names that were submitted determined? For the last presidential search committee, USAC solicited nominations from all staff and then submitted those names to the BOT.

**Idea/Rationale:** I am writing in response to the email update about the Presidential Search Process that came earlier today. I am concerned about the nomination process and selection of staff representation on the Presidential Search Committee. While staff were alerted, along with the rest of the UR community, that there would be a presidential search, I did not hear or read about an opportunity to nominate staff to serve on the Presidential Search Committee. How were these nominations collected and submitted? I was encouraged to read that USAC was asked for nominations, as they should be and as they have been in the past. However, the staff selected to serve on the search committee do not represent the diverse experiences of staff who serve the campus and our students each day. I would hope to see staff that could speak to their own experiences on-campus truthfully as employees from all levels of the organization, who could represent the diverse experiences of students based on personal interactions, and who could represent the University of Richmond that we strive to be: diverse, equitable, and a place where everyone can thrive. Without representative voices, candidates will not understand the University of Richmond truthfully. I believe that staff who are not at the AVP and VP level need to be
represented and their voices need to have an equal spot at the table. A search committee with diverse representation can best represent the UR that we are inviting someone to lead.

**Idea/Rationale:** Presidential Search Committee: Sincerely concerned by the lack of inclusion of varying levels of staff; would have loved to see a representative from the USAC executive team. As has been demonstrated by the University's COVID response, staff from all levels are deeply invested in the success and future of the institution. It would go a long way to demonstrate that perspectives and experiences of all members of the University community matter and are valued.

**Idea/Rationale:** Expressing disappointment with Presidential Search Committee: I am disturbed by the lack of representation from staff on the Presidential Search Committee, announced yesterday. As a manager, I know that the majority of UR staff serve in non-managerial roles. For both staff positions on the committee to be senior leaders (a VP and an AVP) is a missed opportunity to ensure representation of diverse perspectives on this critical committee. This is an oversight that can be remedied--the Board should appoint an additional staff position to the committee as soon as possible, matching the number of faculty already represented. This position should be drawn from the suggestions already submitted by USAC and should be a staff member in a non-managerial role. To select a new leader, who will both represent and shape our University culture, all critical constituent voices must be included. (Alternatively, the additional staff position could be substituted for one of the Board of Trustee positions. Since the Board has final say over the selection of the candidates, it appears unnecessarily controlling for the Board to dominate the committee with double the number of representatives as any other constituent group.)

**Idea/Rationale:** Are all 5 schools represented on the presidential Search Committee? I specifically don't see anyone representing the Jepson School. It seems there should be staff, faculty and/or student representation from all 5 schools. Maybe the committee is lean, and then there will be another avenue for faculty, staff and students to give feedback.

**Idea/Rationale:** Presidential search committee concern: I recently received an email regarding the presidential search committee. I'm thankful for this work, recognizing that this search is largely a volunteer effort. I also recognize that there appears to be some intention regarding the make up of the committee; however, from what I can see, it seems to fall short in terms of the lived experiences represented. For example, I only see two staff members represented on this committee. Their respective viewpoints are valuable (athletics and admissions); however, neither has an intimate, working knowledge of what happens "on the ground" on a day-to-day basis. (Also, I don't intend to minimize the student representatives; however, staff members who work with students on a regular basis and staff members who work on the frontlines (e.g., dining services) would have valuable insight for this committee.) Secondly, from a visual standpoint, the ethnic diversity is minimal (women of color and people from asian backgrounds seem to be low, if not completely absent). As institution that is striving for equitable outcomes, as well as equitable processes, I hope Mr. Queally and Ms. Quisenberry will consider, at the very least, making some important additions to the committee.
Response from the Board of Trustees
October 26, 2020

Mr. Mark Stanton
Chair
University Staff Advisory Council

Dear Mark:

Thank you for your recent message on behalf of USAC about the Presidential Search Committee, and the accompanying messages reflecting the perspectives of individual staff members.

I discussed this topic with the Board at our meeting on Friday. We are grateful for the staff’s strong interest in additional representation on the search committee. However, the Board established the composition with great care and attention to a variety of considerations, and we are all in agreement that the current composition is the most appropriate composition.

We are grateful to USAC for assembling the impressive slate of nominees, and the Board was pleased to select AVP and Dean of Admission Gil Villanueva from that list of nominees to serve on the committee. It was our assumption (as I believe Ann Lloyd Breeden conveyed in discussing the Board’s invitation to USAC to provide a slate of nominees) that all nominees on USAC’s slate would be colleagues that USAC viewed as excellent representatives of the staff as a whole, rather than as representatives of a specific area or category of staff. Indeed, in charging the search committee, I stressed that it was the responsibility of all members to approach our important work as University citizens representing the interests of the University as a whole.

As you know, selecting the University’s President is the Board’s single greatest responsibility. In its history to date, the University has only had ten presidents. At the time a committee is needed, the Board must form the committee according to its best judgment and in response to particular circumstances. In this most important responsibility, the Board must always have such latitude. Accordingly, the composition of a past search committee—particularly with respect to the number or allocation of seats—should not be considered a precedent for future search committees.

The committee’s success in fulfilling its charge, of course, also depends on the active and candid involvement of members of the University community in defining the qualities, skills, and experience the University’s next President will require and the challenges and opportunities the next President will face. We are grateful that USAC will meet directly with the Spencer Stuart team to provide your perspective on these important questions. We also look forward to the perspective of the staff more broadly through both the virtual town hall meetings that will be offered and the survey that will soon be distributed to the University community. The committee very much welcomes and appreciates this input to guide their work.

The Board is pleased to collaborate with the exceptionally strong and diverse committee that has been appointed, and which we are confident will do an outstanding job representing the interests of the University community in recruiting and assessing candidates and ultimately recommending finalists to the
Board. With you, we look forward to recruiting an outstanding new leader for the University of Richmond, to build on the University’s strong foundation of excellence and to achieve our shared aspirations for the institution.

I also wish to convey the Board’s deep appreciation to all members of the University’s staff for your exceptional dedication to the University and its students. We recognize the creativity, resiliency, determination, and exceptional professionalism that have been required of the staff in order to resume and sustain, amidst the challenges of the pandemic, the residential educational experience that is the hallmark of a Richmond education. We are deeply grateful.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Paul B. Queally
Rector
Board of Trustees
Presidential Search Committee Members
Presidential Search (./index.html)

Search Committee

The Committee will be charged with identifying candidates, reviewing qualifications, conducting interviews, and recommending finalists from which the Board of Trustees will select Dr. Critcher's successor as President of the University of Richmond.

The Committee brings its work extensive knowledge and deep commitment to the University's excellence, a remarkable diversity of experience and perspectives, and high aspirations for the outcome of the search and the University's future.

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