

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Regents  
Murray State University  
October 23, 2024**

**Call to Order**

The Murray State University (MSU) Board of Regents Presidential Search Committee met on Wednesday, October 23, 2024, in Special Session in Room 118 Wells Hall on the Murray State University campus. Chair Leon Owens called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and welcomed those joining the meeting in person and via ZOOM or livestream. Representatives from Academic Search – Dr. Wanda Bigham and Dr. Margaret Venable – who will be assisting the Search Committee throughout the process were also present.

**Welcome and Introductions/Presence Confirmation**

Presidential Search Committee members were asked to introduce themselves and the following were present: Vice Chair Robbie Fitch and Regents Virginia Gray (via ZOOM), Brendan Hawkins, G. L. Ovey, Leon Owens, Matthew Price, Emily Roark, Melony Shemberger (via ZOOM), Tom Waldrop and David Wilson. Additional Search Committee members present were Dan Wann, Professor of Psychology; Roslyn White, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management; Katelyn Young, Murray State Graduate Student and Student-Athlete and Ad Hoc Committee members Courtney Hixon, Director of Human Resources; Jill Hunt, Senior Executive Coordinator for the President, Coordinator for Board Relations and Secretary to the Board and Rob Miller, General Counsel. Absent: Regent David Meinschein.

Also present were Executive Director of Marketing and Communication Shawn Touney; Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Professions Dina Byers, Information Technology staff and a member of the local news media.

**AGENDA**

<b><u>Call to Order</u></b>	<b>Chair Leon Owens</b>
<b><u>Welcome and Introductions/Presence Confirmation</u></b>	<b>Chair Leon Owens</b>
<b><u>Search Committee Charge</u></b>	<b>Chair Leon Owens</b>
<b><u>Search Process Code of Ethics</u></b>	<b>Dr. Wanda Bigham Academic Search Consultant</b>
<b><u>Proposed Search Schedule/Outline of Future Meetings</u></b>	<b>Dr. Margaret Venable Academic Search Consultant</b>
<b><u>Requirements/Preferences for Next President</u></b>	<b>Chair Leon Owens</b>
<b><u>Adjournment</u></b>	<b>Chair Leon Owens</b>

Dr. Bigham reported she has been involved with 70 searches for Academic Search all over the country. She was President of Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama, for ten years and President of Marycrest College in Davenport, Iowa, prior to that for six years, and has served as Vice President for Development at Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts. Prior to that she was Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs at Morehead State University in Morehead, Kentucky. Upon completion of the last presidency, she was invited to join Academic Search – the first search firm to specifically serve higher education. Academic Search only assists with higher education searches. She and Margaret do not make any decisions but, based on the University’s criteria, will bring a pool of candidates for the Search Committee to review and consider so they can make a decision about the individual who represents the best fit for Murray State. She is looking forward to working with each member of the Search Committee.

Dr. Venable indicated she has served as a university President in the University System of Georgia. It is important to note that Academic Search not only serves higher education but specializes in this arena. All employees at Academic Search have some expertise in higher

education and this helps provide a special perspective as members are recruiting leaders for others.

### **Search Committee Charge, received**

Chair Owens read aloud the following Presidential Search Committee Charge:

## **MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY SEARCH FOR THE PRESIDENT**

### **CHARGE TO THE SEARCH COMMITTEE**

The Search Committee will conduct a national search to identify finalists for the position of university President. These tasks below should be completed by May 2025 and the following protocol will be used during the search.

1. The Committee will observe confidentiality in the conduct of the search.
2. The Search Committee will work closely with Dr. Wanda Bigham and Dr. Margaret Venable of Academic Search, Inc., to conduct a national search. This search will include an announcement in appropriate publications and on the Murray State University website. The Search Consultants will have direct contact with individuals who may recommend candidates or choose to be candidates themselves.
3. The Search Consultants will review all applications, rate candidate applications and make all applications available to the Search Committee through the secure electronic file system at Academic Search.
4. The Search Committee, with the assistance of the Search Consultants, will meet in January 2025 to identify a group of candidates for interviews. The size of the group is likely to be ten candidates.
5. The Search Committee, with the assistance of the Search Consultants, will interview the semifinalists in February 2025.
6. Upon completion of the interviews, the Search Committee and Search Consultants will identify a smaller group of candidates, likely three to five, who will be invited to campus.
7. The Search Consultants will work with the Search Committee to organize campus visits for up to five finalists in March or April 2025.
8. The Search Committee and Search Consultants will gather input from the campus community.

Chair Owens indicated that during Homecoming several comments were made about the Search Committee not having alumni representation. As members introduced themselves it became clear that several are alumni of Murray State, including himself. From this perspective, alumni are represented on this Search Committee. The Committee must also be careful not to entertain any potential applicants previously employed by the University who may have left under less than favorable conditions. The Search Committee must understand that a lot of folks are now going to be their friends and will be asking questions regarding what is going on. Search Committee meetings are open to the public but Closed Sessions will be utilized once the vetting of candidates begins and all understand this need for confidentiality. It is best to refer any such questions to the Presidential Search Committee Chair.

### **Search Process Code of Ethics, received**

Dr. Bigham indicated she cannot express enough the importance of confidentiality throughout this process and beyond. A pool of candidates that the Search Committee would want to interview cannot be developed unless they are confident their application materials will be kept confidential. There will be discussions where the Committee will have to go into Executive Session. If Committee members are asked for information on the search process, they should direct any such inquiries to her or to Chair Owens. This represents an occasion when people could lose their jobs over the news becoming public that they have applied to another university. The point at which individuals are invited to come to campus for an interview is when the news of their candidacy becomes public. At the beginning of this process, these candidates belong to Dr. Bigham. Search Committee members will have access to every application but must not reach out to the candidate, their preacher, their institution or anyone. Their application must remain confidential so they feel secure applying for the position. At the point these individuals become finalists, their materials will become public to Murray State and others, if they choose to proceed in the process. In the very last stage of this process the finalists will be brought to campus so everyone can see and talk with these individuals.

Dr. Bigham read aloud the following Code of Ethics:

### **SEARCH COMMITTEE CODE OF ETHICS**

To attract the best candidates, retain until closure those who are most competitive and fulfill a responsibility to treat candidates confidentially and ethically, the Search Committee must commit itself to the following code of ethics:

- As a member of this Search Committee, I accept the responsibility, shared by other committee members, to protect the integrity of the institution and respect the rights and dignity of all persons involved.
- I will maintain in strict confidence and in perpetuity all information about candidates during the search process (e.g., names, written materials, references) as well as not reveal any of the committee members' work on this process, including discussions or decision-making during the process or at any time thereafter.
- I will put aside personal agendas, biases or political positions so that each candidate has an honest and fair evaluation.
- I agree to disclose all real or potential conflicts of interest to the Chair of the Committee or the entire Committee.
- I certify that I am not, nor will I become, an applicant for the permanent position.
- I will guard against inaccuracies, carelessness, bias and distortion made by either emphasis or omission of information and will give accurate and complete reports on candidates to the Committee.
- I will take care when taking notes in interviews or filling out evaluation forms. Federal, state and institutional discrimination laws and policies are always to be adhered to.
- I acknowledge that only the Chair of the Search Committee is authorized to speak to the news media on behalf of the Committee.

Each member of the Presidential Search Committee was asked to sign and date the Code of Ethics and return to Secretary Hunt.

### **Proposed Search Schedule/Outline of Future Meetings, presented**

Dr. Venable presented a proposed search schedule/outline of future meetings to the Presidential Search Committee for consideration and no suggestions for revisions were made. She also reminded the Committee that Academic Search will actively be recruiting candidates for the next President of Murray State University. Information is currently being gathered that will be published in the University Profile and examples from current searches are available on the Academic Search website. The goal is to have the Profile published before Thanksgiving because Academic Search needs at least six weeks to spend recruiting applicants. The goal is for there to be a robust pool of candidates so the Search Committee's decision is as difficult as possible. Committee members should not reveal to others how many candidates there are and whether any are internal because anything that is said outside the process could potentially be damaging to the search. The importance of confidentiality cannot be overemphasized. The confidential candidate portal will be released approximately halfway through the recruitment cycle so Search Committee members can begin reviewing applications. Semifinalist interviews can be held via ZOOM or in person over at least two days. Following the semifinalist interviews, the Committee will meet to discuss the candidates to identify those who should be brought to campus. The Search Firm conducts a lot of background checks on the candidates, particularly the further they advance in the process. By the time these individuals are candidates on campus they have been thoroughly vetted. Academic Search does not typically come to campus for the finalist interviews because the University needs to take ownership of these individuals at that point. The Search Firm can assist with communications in this regard.

Dr. Bigham provided clarification that Academic Search does not work with individuals to help them find jobs. Instead, they work with universities – only higher education institutions. Nominations are welcome and encouraged and any such individuals identified by this means would be invited to apply for the position. Once the position description and qualifications and desired leadership characteristics are posted on the Academic Search and/or Murray State websites they will contain information on how to apply for the position. A portion of this information will be developed into an advertisement that will also be posted publicly. The advertisement will include contact information for Drs. Bigham and Venable. All were cautioned against googling potential candidates for the position on social media because that is part of the work Academic Search will undertake.

## **Requirements/Preferences for Next President, presented**

A draft of the qualifications and desired leadership characteristics for the next President of Murray State University was presented to the Presidential Search Committee. A draft of the Position Description was also included in the materials presented. Members were asked to send any suggested changes/additions/deletions to these two documents to Secretary Hunt before close of business on Friday, October 25, 2024.

Chair Owens read aloud the draft qualifications and desired leadership characteristics for the next President as follows:

- Demonstrated ability to lead and manage a large, complex organization, work effectively with the Board of Regents, build a strong leadership team and possess a commitment to integrity and ethics.
- An ability to articulate a vision for the future of Murray State University that can be developed into a Strategic Plan.
- Decisive management skills exemplified by a record of courage in making tough decisions in an environment with competing demands and limited resources. Proven experience in utilizing a transparent, collaborative process in decision making that invites multiple perspectives.
- Record of success as a visionary executive, including the fiscal skills and acumen necessary to facilitate the allocation of resources effectively and efficiently among competing needs of the institution.
- Demonstrated success in cultivating relationships with potential donors to secure transformational gifts and partnering with the Murray State University Foundation to design major capital campaigns.
- Demonstrated record of success in promoting and sustaining efforts to attract and retain a highly qualified and diverse faculty, staff and student body.
- A visible, energetic and tireless champion for higher education that keeps students at the forefront of all efforts and values shared governance and recognizes that exceptional instruction and scholarship are essential to the institution's success.
- Ability to work effectively in partnership with other university leaders and local, state and national political leaders.
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to inspire and motivate students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni and other constituencies.
- Appreciation for the significance of a national athletics program to the overall image and success of the institution and the ability to work with the National Collegiate Athletic Association and the Missouri Valley Conference.

Chair Owens expressed appreciation to Drs. Bigham and Venable for visiting campus. They have meetings scheduled with several constituency groups the remainder of today and tomorrow to gather information on what individuals are looking for in the next President and to get a feel for the Murray community. The Search Committee looks forward to working with the Search Consultants to achieve a positive outcome.

Dr. Bigham reminded the Search Committee that the Consultants will relate only to Chair Owens and will not correspond with individual Committee members. Chair Owens added that Secretary Hunt will also be sending out necessary information to the Committee on his behalf.

Confirmation was provided that a number of sitting Presidents are expected to be interested in this opportunity at Murray State given its attractiveness, the existence of extra money for buildings on campus and all the positive accolades the institution is receiving. This is bound to produce a very good pool of applicants and a number of those will be sitting Presidents.

## **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Presidential Search Committee, Chair Owens declared the Special Meeting adjourned. Adjournment was at 9:55 a.m.

  
Secretary Jill Hunt

  
Chair Leon Owens

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