

Resolution Regarding WKU Presidential Search:

In response to the increasing trend among colleges and universities to make the hiring of presidents and chancellors a secretive process, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has issued a statement (dated November 3, 2015) that points out two very important facts:

1. *“No evidence has ever been offered... that open meetings discourage applications from highly qualified candidates.”*
2. *“... decisions to forgo public campus visits and public forums by finalists violate longstanding principles of shared governance. Shared governance helps ensure that universities and colleges serve the public interest. Serving this interest is why we have public universities and colleges and why we grant special tax status to nonprofit private universities and colleges.”*

WKU is not a privately held corporation, but a public institution with a responsibility to its campus members and the wider community to ensure that the best possible choice for our next president be made. Such an outcome is only possible if the decision-making process is transparent and open to the greatest possible input from a diverse array of community members, not solely the product of a select group operating exclusively behind closed doors.

A 2013 report from the AAUP’s Committee on College and University Governance entitled “Confidentiality and Faculty Representation in Academic Governance” declares that, at the stage at which finalists in a presidential search are interviewed,

“the names of finalists should be made public to the campus community so that the community at large, faculty committees, or at least selected faculty members have an opportunity to interview the finalists and forward their views to the search committee or to a consulting firm employed by the college or university... before a final decision is made.”

Furthermore, in the public forums held on campus regarding the upcoming presidential search, the faculty made clear its desire that our new president should demonstrate “commitment to inclusive excellence and transparency as core values that enhance the educational mission [of WKU].” This desire is in line with the AAUP website Presidential Search Committee Checklist, which emphasizes the importance of transparency to a successful presidential search. It makes clear that such policies benefit both the prospective president and the campus community in determining their mutual suitability, and allows candidates the opportunity to engage with and understand the institution’s culture. Such pre-hire interaction, the report continues, is also “extraordinarily useful to the search committee in making its final recommendation to the board.”

In light of these statements and the principles of shared governance they are meant to uphold, the University Senate respectfully proposes and strongly requests that the presidential search remain open with respect to the finalist candidates. Furthermore, we request that, in the interests of consensus building and the sincere desire for a successful relationship between the incoming president and the campus community at large, that:

1. the top three finalists be brought to campus and given the opportunity to share their views, plans, and qualifications with the campus community in a public forum;
2. the campus community be given the appropriate opportunity to provide its input on the final choice for president.