Presidential Search Input Session

Date: 9/28/18

Group: Non-academic senior admins

Approx. Number of Attendees: 50

Search Committee Members Present: n/a—Terry Sullivan session

Responses to 1st Question:
What qualities, characteristics, and criteria are desired in a new president of MSU?

Pres needs to come from somewhere else; global experience to be globally relevant, wide base of experience

Willing to be challenged, not set agenda based on one opinion, allow people to present data/concepts, be willing to listen, be willing to have institution set, not just one person

Pres needs to exhibit emotional intelligence; ability to develop collab, listen, motivate; pres tend to be transactional rather than transformative—new one needs to be transformative; only been here 9 months and has seen wealth of knowledge/experience in senior leadership, keep them motivated; focus on fundraising, ability to develop partnerships; pres affect higher level on moving forward

Know and understand that this is one organization, not 2 separate; supports and teaches; large and complex that should be run in that frame of mind—not admin side of house and faculty/research side of the house

Credibility issue currently, not as enormous as we think it is; pres needs to be aware that healing needs to take place with external constituents; raise the bar, challenge constituents to raise the bar

Has to be willingness to make choices; many aspirations (and constraints, resources, etc) to make choices and be advised by leaders
Pres who makes us proud to be Spartans, last couple years have been very hard, need someone to bring us back together

Optimism: sometimes we feel like we failed, make changes, adjustments

Research is big driver on campus, lots of rankings come from that; promote research; for future/rep of MSU; lot of compliance/audit, we need to be aware; pres sensitive to all the functions; fed rules/regs

Ability to lead and teach us to be more collaborative, open to learn from each other; climate of oppression/criticism; need to be able to collaborate to solve problems; leader who says let’s support each other, we don’t criticize constructively

Committed to the one community aspect, focus on the culture and support different functions/goals; recognize latent potential on campus; someone who has experience in an academic setting

Lead by listening/collaboration and not by fear

Leader who is able to understand complex system—decentralized—silos; someone who can see breadth/depth, see rallying areas, important/meaningful; can’t be put upon us, but pulled together; pres who understands the landgrant mission; political time and making sure our university is a resource for community

Leader who is able to pulled together shared vision, willing to empower

Leader who has demoed exec level skills—someone who can see/translate big picture, but can also execute the vision at complex org w/multiple aspects ($2bil)

pres has to understand the culture; long term employees and recognize and use service as springboard; people care about MSU and we need to recognize

Someone who speaks to inclusion—not just lip service; admin doesn’t always hear, transformative leader who can connect to students

Leader who will model all of the attributes that we decide on, what a leader ought to be/behave

Commitment to diversity—that that’s a core principle to them; diversity and inclusion in every aspect of the university

Self awareness of strengths/weaknesses—we won’t be able to check ALL of the boxes, and we shouldn’t think they can and THEY shouldn’t think they can

Proven they can work with community around them; greater opp for lansing/EL
Responses to 2nd Question:
Higher education is facing many challenges today. What do you consider to be the major challenges facing MSU?

What do we want to be? We’ve been all things to all people, but resources might be constrained; immune in last decade, but now we’re feeling it, everyone wants out of state and international students; what is it that we want to do? Athletics talk about competition—should we reduce number of sports for resources? Same is true in academic areas, we keep a broad base and we have to face those questions; if we want to be world class, we’ll have tough decisions; lots of “moneyball” talk, do more with less

Financial challenges; less than we might think when you hear about settlement, but larger than that is the enrollment issues (challenges with base budget); drop in international students, and we have less out of state students than big 10 peers—we have the enrollment, but at in-state tuition; we’ve grown w/acad initiatives, use combo of resources to build, but might have to slow down;

Resources side, if we look at peers we’re about 30% understaffed comparatively; people work really hard, but new pres coming in and resource constriction; it’s keeping people motivated to support the mission; we do more on smaller staff

Make choices: issues facing MSU there are a number of areas we’re trying to catch up (enrollment marketing—we thought we had the luxury not to do that), we’ve not developed other areas that other Universities have; how we approach different modes of learning (online education); other institutions are ahead of us; we’ll have to catch up or trim back in other areas

Enrollment issue is a revenue issue, but it’s also our job; do we understand our job as educators? Immediate transitional change w/new pres, largest freshman class, but changes could be coming next fall; little to do with reputation, just with numbers; can we change policies and admissions to keep up; comm issues around admissions

Big place, lots of units; we’ve gotta work differently; enrollment is not just an admissions problem, it’s a systems problem; international student transition; and making them proud alum; leadership needs to pull together

Are we spread too thin? Understaffed or not prioritizing (can’t be excellent at everything); we’ve grown beyond everything we try to support; priorities at what we’re excellent at; people struggling with flexibility in workplace; be well and stay well; recruitment/retention—the childcare problem is mammoth, we can’t get people and we can’t people because of childcare; that kind of consideration into account is important

Grad education touches on all core missions; research, outreach, support; online education; decisions impact each others missions/visions

Diverse domestic class but still have achievement gap with students of color, challenge that’s out there, but we need to graduate them

Few areas we’re leading in but they have more, UM has more; own community—the better students go to UM and politicians making funding decisions

Funding: huge issue, we’re just back to 2011 levels not taking inflation into consideration; new leadership/legislation
Mental healthcare needs for students; this group here is battle-tested, young/progressive leaders, but we are facing resource problem, struggling to make it to resources

We have an elected board, and the way they’re nominated and elected, different than most around the country, especially those from a private background; appointed boards vs elected board

Student advocacy and input; act on the input received from customers, if we don’t listen, they’ll go elsewhere. We don’t seem to value undergrad experience, decisions made w/limited input from customers (students), let’s ask them what they want in tuition/fees; do not have accessed fees for facilities and services; student voice determines the services—this process occurs at every other Big 10; ask the students

Strength of character to make difficult decisions, and ones that may be unpopular but necessary; thoughtfulness and ability to communicate WHY decisions are made

Lead a culture of trust, with own transparency and give people the benefit of the doubt, not just the doubt

Responses to 3rd Question:
Focusing on the future, what do you consider to be important strengths and opportunities for MSU?

Optimistic: we are having the conversation now; where we need to go, what we need to change; latent potential; seeing across campus the number of people engaged constructively; how to have better culture here; diversity and inclusion—people are already working on it

One strength is our people; great deal of commitment, strong Spartans and feel very passionately about MSU; solid direction and people will come along with; we’ve been too silo

Essence of our brand—brand is culture—brand is expressing on the outside what you feel on the inside—this is the most values driven place I’ve ever been, very consistent and stayed true; admirable and come from the Land Grant roots, when expressed they do great things

Mission driven faculty/staff, our salaries are lower than big 10, but we lead giving in big 10 and we’re number 4 in the AAU

We all have our differences, but when it’s time for students and they need us, we will make it happen, stop what they’re doing and help students, different here than other places, put aside differences to make a difference in the lives of our students
Extraordinary faculty recruited here; bright future moving forward and with young junior faculty; hearing faculty at BOT talk about research; someone should be really proud to come here; mobility cutting edge; we’re super humble, don’t always toot own horn

State-wide impact; good work and that we serve the whole state is valuable

MSU first U in 1956 to make commitment to internationalization—woven into the fabric of the institution; ranked in top 10 for inbound and outbound; 130+ different countries represented in students; global sources of funding; when you put it all together, we’re competitive in attracting students, faculty, collaborators

Students want to work with admin to make MSU better, they want to be engaged/involved; new pres has opportunity to rally 50,300 students to work with staff and admins, they really want to be involved

MSU has some of the most well educated, future focused admins; ready, willing, able to implement practices

Tremendous creativity available to culture shift, lot of potential

Brand recognition, huge enrollment, athletics

Wharton center; we are so fortunate to have a world class performing arts center on campus; most don’t have that unless an urban area

Because we need to leap frog, we have an opportunity to build up areas we’re lacking on compared to other institutions – place for a leader to make a mark

Michigan is beautiful!

Less ego-driven, more service-driven than other places, looking for vision and opportunities

Neighborhood concept: makes large school feel smaller for our undergrads, very aligned with student success, resources where students are rather than making them travel to it

Half billion dollars in last 3 years for infrastructure, new faculty, these investments are made in cutting-edge areas (data science, customized medicine) and will engage country’s attention, young faculty members from ivy’s, will do a lot of good for U; biggest weakness we have is inability to focus on a few areas and do well, we have many ineffective programs and we’re unwilling to deal with them; we can’t make investments in new areas; we have invested in the NFL model rather than the Darwinian one; unable to make tough decisions (no pay raises for next 2 years, $500 million will have no financial impact) the 2 year salary raises equal the interest but we’re unwilling to take the step; next leader has to be willing to “sell pain”
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<th>General Comments:</th>
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<td>Other:</td>
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