

**Virginia Military Institute
Superintendent Search Committee Meeting
Wednesday, 9 December 2020**

Minutes

A meeting of the VMI Superintendent Search Committee was held on Wednesday, 9 December 2020, at 8:00am. The meeting was held virtually through Zoom's conference platform pursuant to § 4-0.01(g) of Chapter 1289 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly. Present from the Committee were:

- Eugene Scott, Jr., Chair
- Thomas R. Watjen, Vice-Chair
- John W. Boland (ex officio)
- Lara T. Chambers
- Charles E. Dominy
- Hugh M. Fain, III
- Conrad M. Hall
- Michael L. Hamlar
- David Miller
- Emily Miller
- Tom Slater
- Samuel Stocks
- Frances Wilson

Also present:

- Deb Love
- Lee Rakes
- Dennis Barden
- Christine Pendleton

Call to Order & Approval of Minutes

The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:00am. The Chair welcomed the committee and outlined the agenda. The Chair reminded attendees that the meeting would be held in open session.

The Chair asked if everyone had the opportunity to review the minutes from the 16 November 2020 meeting and then asked if there questions or comments about the minutes. With no remarks from the committee members, the Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was granted by Mr. Hall and seconded by Mr. Watjen. Approval of the motion was unanimous.

Confidentiality & Ethics Policy

The Chair discussed the importance of confidentiality and ethics in the search process, noting that the search would be closed in order to help deter candidates' reticence to apply otherwise. The chair stated that the consequences of non-compliance may result in removal from the committee.

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the confidentiality and ethics policy. The motion was granted by Mr. Watjen and seconded by Mr. Conrad Hall. Approval of the motion was unanimous. The Chair then asked the committee members to sign the form and return it to COL Rakes.

Search Firm: WittKieffer

The chair introduced two members of the search firm team: Mr. Dennis Barden and Ms. Christine Pendleton. Mr. Barden discussed the proposed timeline, beginning with the listening session schedule. Ms. Deb Love clarified that only two members of the search committee may attend a session.

Mr. Barden indicated that the information from the listening sessions and other information provided by VMI would be used to generate a draft of the leadership profile; two-thirds will be VMI background information, one-third is generated from the listening sessions. The profile will be an executive summary that doubles as an advertisement, description of the ideal candidate, measures of success for the next superintendent. The document will be sent to the search committee for review and approval. He noted that COL Rakes will serve as the clerk of the revisions to streamline the process, with a desire for a 23 December 2020 final approval.

Mr. Barden recommended that the recruitment period run from January through February. He suggested that the committee should meet in the second week of February. The week of March 8, 2021 candidate materials will be posted for review through a secure website. The week of March 22, 2021 the committee will meet at length to discuss the candidates and choose semi-finalists for interviews, usually 8-10. In early April the search committee will set aside two full, preferably consecutive, days for candidate interviews. The finalists will be interviewed by the full Board of Visitors, which will thereafter make its selection.

Mr. Miller sought clarification for how the interviews will be conducted. Mr. Barden stated that the interviews will be conducted with the full committee present for each session.

Mr. Barden discussed the importance of confidentiality and the likelihood that desirable candidates are likely to be currently employed. Candidates do not want to compromise their standing with their employer, so the quality of the candidates improves when the search is confidential. Mr. Barden recommended a hybrid search approach, whereby the search is mostly closed. Instead of open forums with finalists, a representation of various constituents will meet with finalists. If this approach is adopted, these individuals will be required to sign confidentiality agreements. Mr. Barden stated that there was no specific recommended number of representatives for the selected groups, though a typical number might be half a dozen. Mr. Barden noted that the idea is to keep it small enough to maintain confidentiality. Mr. Barden

sought assurance that the hybrid approach was acceptable, the Chair stated that it was and that there is consensus among committee members.

Mr. Barden made a few points about the recruitment process. He stated that they would mine their own databases and VMI's as well for potential candidates. The job will be advertised, they will do direct marketing, and calling people directly (more than usual). Referrals and nominations will be very important, both from within and outside of VMI.

Mr. Barden discussed desired candidate qualifications, as well as other considerations. The Chair asked Mr. Barden about candidate interviews, specifically if the full board of visitors should be involved in that process. Or, should the candidates be presented to the board after the interview are complete. Mr. Barden stated that having the full board meet with the candidates is standard.

Public Comments

The Chair asked COL Rakes to facilitate the public comment portion of the meeting. COL Rakes stated that one individual requested the opportunity for comment, COL Holly Richardson, VMI professor of physical education. COL Richardson thanked the group for the opportunity. She stated that she has been at the institute since 1997. She affirmed the importance of change and change within higher education. The new hire has the potential to effect change toward foundational relevance within higher education. She discussed the admittance of African-Americans at VMI in 1967 and the admittance of women at VMI in 1997. She requested that the committee widen the window they examine candidates through, to engage candidates with diverse thoughts, experiences, expertise, and backgrounds. She continued: this step is the first step toward the future. The next superintendent needs the capacity to look forward and bring the faculty along with them, seek collective ideas, a diversity of voices. Need to be brave, but also humble, open to a wide variety of views. The Chair thanked COL Richardson for her remarks.

Mr. Hall asked COL Rakes if the slate was full for the day's scheduled listening sessions. The Chair and COL Rakes discussed the listening session schedule and how to access the sessions.

ADJOURN

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 10:06a.m.