

## FACULTY REGENT UPDATE

TO: The Faculty  
FROM: Ray Mendel, Faculty Regent  
SUBJECT: Presidential Search Update  
DATE: February 12, 1997

Change has been the hallmark of this academic year. With Peggy Loafman, we have new leadership on the Board of Regents. With Dr. Burch, we have new leadership in Academic Affairs. With Ann Mead, we have new leadership in the Budget Office. Most recently, we learned that we will soon have new leadership in the President's Office. Along with the uncertainty accompanying these changes are enhanced opportunities for focused growth and meaningful innovation.

No single decision confronting the institution is more important than that of selecting a president. The Board is fully cognizant of the awesome responsibility it has for crafting a recruitment and selection process that results in the most capable candidate ultimately being offered - and accepting the invitation to become Western's next president. As your representative on the Board, the purpose of this note is to let you know where we are today, and where we appear to be headed.

Our first meeting addressing the search process was held Saturday, February 8th. At this meeting the Board unanimously voted to hire a firm which specializes in the recruitment and selection of college and university presidents. This decision reflects the Board's belief that we should conduct a genuine national search for the best possible candidate. We were all persuaded that by using a nationally recognized and experienced "head hunter", the pool of qualified candidates is likely to be larger, and the initial screening process more systematic and efficient. By law, the contract for this service must be bid. The Board expects to reconvene on February 24th to award the contract.

Also on the 24th, the Board will discuss the composition of a search committee to work together with the search firm in the earlier stages of the recruitment and screening process. At our February 8th meeting, a search firm representative (i.e. a "head hunter") contemplated a committee of perhaps as many as ten persons including those selected from one or more as yet unspecified "constituencies" (e.g., students, faculty, alumni, the community, staff, administration, and a small number of Board members). Clearly, this committee and its membership will be the subject of some discussion on the 24th.

More in the context of brainstorming, at our February 8th meeting, the "head hunter" roughed out a process going forward which involved having the search committee articulate the selection criteria, having the search firm earn its fee by identifying perhaps as many as the ten best prospects based on these criteria, and then having the committee narrow this pool to perhaps five candidates, who might then be invited to campus. No discussion has yet taken place regarding the format for campus visits, but these visits probably would provide the major

opportunity for interaction with, and feedback from the larger campus and local communities.

Please anticipate and support procedures that strictly protect the identity of all candidates until such time as they are scheduled for campus visits. There really is a very compelling reason for this. Absent this policy, many highly capable prospects will simply not apply because all but the ultimate appointee has to return to his or her present job as an unsuccessful candidate. It is profoundly in our best interest to reduce the "costs" associated with making oneself available for initial consideration. There will be plenty of opportunity to learn more about the finalists once the "short list" is announced.

That is as far as we have gotten. Obviously much remains to be decided. What is clear to me at this point is that we are committed to a real and meaningful national search. This decision reflects absolutely no bias toward or against any prospective internal candidate(s). Most importantly, while recognizing that it must cast the deciding vote, I am encouraged by my sense that the Board deeply desires as inclusive a process as is both manageable and productive.

Please feel free to share your thoughts with me. I'll do my best to keep you informed.