2020-2021 Faculty Trustee Recommending Committee
Final Report - May 12, 2021

Summary

The 2020-2021 Faculty Trustee Recommending Committee met in January 2021 to screen candidates and select finalists to be forwarded to the ASCSU for consideration as Faculty Trustee Nominees. Based on the committee's experience and feedback from colleagues after the interviews and vote in March 2021, this report highlights comments and suggestions for changes in several areas of the selection process. A major conclusion is that the entire selection process should be re-envisioned to ensure transparency, clarity, fairness and inclusivity in all aspects of the search for Faculty Trustee Nominees. The 2021-2022 Executive Committee may wish to create an ad hoc committee, made up at least in part of Senators who have served on past Recommending Committees, to engage in that work.

Suggestions

The role of the Committee and criteria for selection need to be clarified. The role of the Committee and criteria for selection are intertwined. The Committee is charged to "screen the original list of nominees and develop recommendations with supporting information." However, the guidance given the committee to use in screening applicants and develop procedures for selecting candidates for nomination is very general and leads to a lack of clarity as to whether the committee should "check off the box" if applicants have minimum qualifications or set its own criteria to use to more actively engage in screening applicants. The need to attend to the inclusiveness of the applicant pool, finalists and nominees was also raised as central to the criteria applicants should meet and committee procedures.

The major issue with regard to the criteria for nominees is the criteria that, "Candidates shall possess experience in academic governance in the California State University." Applicants are asked to explain their academic governance experience and provide evidence of teaching excellence. But the general statement "experience in academic governance" could mean anything from campus based service on a campus shared governance committee, as department chair or as a campus academic senator, to systemwide CSU governance service on the ASCSU, a systemwide task force or intersegmental service in the C-ID process. The generality of the current criteria and the ability of the Committee to set its own criteria could also lead to an applicant being turned away one cycle and wholeheartedly embraced the next, depending upon what any given committee established as acceptable experience. The generality of the criteria could also exacerbate confusion among potential applicants about what type of experience they really need. As one colleague put it, "First, it seems clear that the ASCSU will not put forward anyone without substantial statewide experience…if it is our sub rosa criteria, we should make it explicit. I hate that we waste our colleagues time, effort, and emotional energy by encouraging people who have no chance to apply."

Some colleagues have argued that systemwide shared governance should be required, such as a minimum number of years of service on the ASCSU or service in some other identifiable

systemwide capacity. Other colleagues think requiring ASCSU service or systemwide service is too limiting, and would exclude applicants with backgrounds and experience that would bring new perspectives to the Trustees and shared governance.

Allow finalists the option of F2F or remote interviews. The Best Practices Appendix suggests that "…Trustee nominee finalists should be available in person at the plenary session in which interviews and voting take place (typically March). The Pandemic necessitated virtual interviews during the 2020-2021 selection cycle. That process worked fairly well. Based on that experience, several colleagues suggested that in the future finalists be given the option of in-person or virtual interviews.

The voting process needs to be re-evaluated. The voting process laid out in the Procedures for Selecting Trustee Nominees is similar to the round-robin process used to select ASCSU Officers. It is designed to reach consensus so there is confidence that the Nominees have the full support of the ASCSU. Comments indicate that for many the process is cumbersome, frustrating, takes too long and may contribute to a bias toward currently serving Senator or Faculty Trustee-finalists. A suggestion that retains the majority-rule principle in Robert's Rules is a straight up-or-down vote on each finalist. Another suggested option that more closely mirrors the current process is some sort of ranked choice voting similar to the process the ASCSU used to choose the second Senator to serve on the Advisory Committee to the Trustees Chancellor Search Committee in Fall 2019. There are two Senators who have the ability to create the means to accommodate this method.
The Procedures also state that the ASCSU should send a minimum of two Nominees (the legal requirement) to the governor for their consideration. The Procedures require the round-robin process to be used until two nominees are selected. Then the ASCSU determines by simple majority vote whether it wishes to continue balloting. If the Senate chooses to continue, one further round of voting, one time, shall take place. Any candidate not nominated by these regular procedures is again eligible for nomination at this time. Any candidate receiving majority of votes cast in this round of voting is declared a nominee. This process guarantees two Nominees, but it makes it extremely difficult for additional Nominees to be chosen should the Senate want to do so. No specific suggestions were made about how to fix this problem, but the recommendation is that it should be addressed as the Senate engages in a whole sale review of the entire selection process.

Is it appropriate for Senator-finalists to vote in the selection of Trustee Nominees? The "Procedures for Selecting Trustee Nominees: indicate that "All academic senators of the Academic Senate of the CSU are eligible to vote" in the selection of Trustee Nominees. The vote is held in executive session which only Senators may attend. In this selection cycle a Senator was a finalist for Trustee Nominee. That gave the senator-finalist an advantage in being able to vote and be present when the vote is taking place. Suggestions were made on both sides of this question. Several colleagues suggested Senator-finalists should continue to be allowed to vote, as they and their campuses would be disenfranchised if they were prevented from doing so. In addition, Senators frequently vote on matters that impact them whether it be a curricular, budget or process issue. Other colleagues suggested that allowing Senator-finalists to vote and be present in the executive session creates a conflict of interest and gives them too much of an advantage over other finalists. One suggestion was that if Senators are barred from voting in the future, a replacement proxy for the Senator-finalist from their campus should be allowed so their campus isn't disenfranchised by the ban.

Ensure maximum transparency in all aspects of the selection process. Existing procedures require that the confidential files of the candidates be made available to Senators starting in January, and Best Practices recommend that trustee nominee finalists be asked the same questions and be given the same time limit to answer. Assuming F2F interviews, Best Practices also recommends that questions of finalists should be displayed "on the screen" so nominees and Senators can consult them during answers.

Based on committee preference, past practice and advice from the Executive Committee, the 2020-2021 Recommending Committee took steps to ensure maximum transparency in the selection process. Finalists' files were made available not only to Senators, but to all finalists. Senators were provided several opportunities to suggest interview questions and finalists were given the questions in advance so they could prepare answers. Senators had access to the questions in advance as well. Virtual interviews made it difficult to display interview questions "on the screen," but providing questions to everyone in advance made that practice unnecessary. Senators could access the questions in drop box and finalists could have them open on their devices as well. The Committee encourages the continuation of these practices (and others as the need arises) to ensure that transparency is an ongoing hallmark of the Nominee selection process. At a minimum the principle should be emphasized as a charge to the Nominee Recommending Committee and as an explicit element of selection procedures.

Develop a mechanism for non-Senator members of the Recommending Committee to stay connected to the process. Once the Recommending Committee finishes screening applicants and forwards finalists to the ASCSU, non-Senator members of the committee are no longer involved in the process and don't have the opportunity to see their work come to fruition in ASCSU interviews of the finalists and the vote to choose Nominees to forward to the governor. A suggestion was made to create a "backdoor" mechanism so these Committee members can participate after the Committee finishes its work. One option is to allow these individuals to observe the interviews and vote.

Recommend best practices to campuses about nominee approval processes to encourage consistency and clarity in procedures across the system. Current procedures require that, "Each campus senate shall develop procedures for selecting eligible nominees. As at least one option, the procedures shall allow for nominations by petition. The campus senate or council shall forward the names of all eligible nominees to the Academic Senate." It is clearly a campus senate (or council – Executive Committee?) responsibility to select nominee applicants to forward to the ASCSU for consideration. In the experience of the 2020-2021 Recommending Committee Chair, there appears to be wide variation in campus senate procedures in this regard. Some campus senates formally approve eligible nominees; on other campuses it appears that the campus senate chair has discretion to approve applicants. In the interest of clarity, fairness and equity, the ASCSU may wish to promote a degree of consistency across campuses by recommending best practices for campus approval processes.

Create an ad hoc committee to engage in a thorough review of the entire Nominee selection process. As should be clear from the nature and extent of suggestions made in this report, there are concerns about a substantial portion of the Nominee selection process. The suggestions are all interrelated and all reflect fundamental principles upon which the selection process should be

built. Process matters because it legitimizes the outcome of committee deliberations. For these reasons the Committee recommends that the 2021-2022 Executive Committee create an ad hoc committee to engage in a thorough review of the entire Nominee selection process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Committee would like to that the ASCSU for the opportunity to participate in the Faculty Trustee Nominee selection process and make suggestions for improvement in future selection cycles. We again encourage the ASCSU to engage in an in depth review of the entire selection process to ensure transparency, clarity, fairness and inclusivity in all aspects of the search for Faculty Trustee Nominees.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chair, 2020-2021 Faculty Trustee Nominee Recommending Committee