

## □ **Choosing a Search Committee Chairman and Committee Members**

Having worked successfully with over thirty-five search committees let us share some insights. Some of these suggestions are crucial for search committee success.

### *Selecting the Chairman*

The Board of Directors has the fiduciary responsibility for providing the overall strategic leadership of the organization with one of its specific duties being the selection of the CEO.

The Chairman of the Search Committee must be widely respected, possibly being the Chairman of the Board or Chairman Elect, or other board member, and hopefully with prior experience on successful search committees.

Given that the Search Committee Chairman has the responsibility for the committee's success, he or she should have a major role in the selection of the committee members.

### *The Board's charge to the Search Committee*

The charge given to the Search Committee should be that they insure there is a thorough search and vetting of candidates, then a recommendation to the Board of the best candidate. They should be prepared with backup candidates in case the Board does not select the person presented or the person withdraws.

If a Search Committee recommends more than one candidate, the Board might feel the need to do their own vetting to insure the board understands the qualifications and fit of the candidate, and to differentiate between the candidates. This needlessly duplicates what the search committee should already have done.

### *Choosing Members with the Right Temperament and Perspective*

To be effective search committee participants, there should be no domineering or weak personalities, and neither personal agendas nor preferences should play a major factor or bias in the committee considerations.

### *The Value of Diversity*

For the sake of diverse perspective, it is best if the committee is comprised of some younger as well as older members, some female as well as male members, different ethnic groups and different professional backgrounds.

### *What Constituencies Are Represented on the Committee?*

While it is not uncommon to select only board members for a search committee, the Board and the organization will be more highly respected internally and externally if the search committee is composed of wise people who also represent the different constituencies of the organization. For a college presidential search that might include a member of the faculty, administration, staff and the student body, plus perhaps the parent of a student, a major donor or an alumnus.

At the same time, the search committee should have a majority of board members because that body ultimately has the responsibility for selecting the president.

*How many members should be on a Search Committee?*

Big enough, but not too big. Nine members might be ideal, with 7 or 11 also acceptable. But if too small then any member's absence is a significant loss of input when making a decision. Conversely, if the committee is too large then it may be difficult to get everyone to attend.