

## **Questions for the OSU Board of Trustees from the Faculty Senate Regarding President Alexander and the Search Process**

The questions and comments in this document were generated by faculty Senators in their apportionment groups during a meeting of the Faculty Senate on 3/11/21. Some additional questions were added by the groups later that evening and the next day. All questions and comments are copied verbatim here.

Additional comments and questions gathered from the Forum registration site will be sent in a separate file.

Respectfully submitted on 3/14/21 by Selina Heppell, Faculty Senate President.

### **INFORMATION MADE AVAILABLE TO THE BOARD**

What did the board of trustees know about this investigation prior to the appointment of F. King Alexander?

Were faculty who worked with Alexander at LSU, such as Faculty Senate Presidents or others in leadership positions, interviewed during the search?

Why did this NOT come up during the search process?

We would like to know more about the hiring process. Did anyone ask the simple question, "is there anything we need to be concerned about?"

Upset with hiring process, why so secretive, what did the search firm know and do that may have kept this information out of the hiring process, and what did the Board and hiring committee do and know?

Most search firms ask candidates if they have anything in their background to disclose that would be embarrassing or harmful to the community. Was this asked of him, and if so, did he talk about this situation?

Was President Alexander's role in the LSU Title IX and sexual misconduct failing disclosed to the OSU Hiring Committee, and if not why weren't they?

What did the Board know during the interview process?

Did the search firm give you any information about Alexander's involvement in Title IX violations at LSU? Or did Alexander himself?

What questions were asked of Alexander during the interviewing process, about the information that was public knowledge at that time?

Please explain how external stakeholder opinions are weighed in the hiring process.

What could the hiring team have done more?

Was he transparent about the report at the outset?

Did the report come up?

There was nothing about this given to the committee. Why wasn't that reported by him during the process?

Was there a third party contractor. Did the contractor find anything? Why not?

The presidential search committee was told to make a confidential process. They were told not to call or contact colleagues that have worked with the candidates. Was this a normal presidential search process?

What was known about this issue during the hiring process? We find it difficult to believe that the head hunting firm did not find this out.

Trustees, did the search firm give you any information about Alexander's involvement in Title IX violations at LSU? Do you think it's wise to use this search firm in the future? Do you think it's wise to use any search firm in the future rather than OSU faculty conducting the search?

And if interviewers didn't, in fact, ask President Alexander about how he handled Title IX cases at LSU, why not?

Did President F. King share that an investigation was ongoing at the time of his hire?

Was President Alexander's role in the LSU Title IX and sexual misconduct failing disclosed to the OSU Hiring Committee, and if not why weren't they?

## **FUTURE SEARCHES**

Trustees, in what ways will you facilitate a university president search differently in the future? What role do you think the secrecy in the hiring process played in hiding Alexander's past from the OSU community?

Will the next president must be hired through an open process with greater engagement?

We also want to be able to engage the Board of Trustees. How can people engage the Board of Trustees? We want to know about the process of hiring. We want faculty governance and engagement throughout these processes.

It should be in our purview as Faculty Senate to ask questions of the Board of Trustees, whether in writing or via a meeting, isn't it?

There cannot be another secretive hiring process. And they say this one was "semi-open" which it was NOT. All members of the search committee (including faculty) had to sign non-disclosure agreement.

FS should definitely submit official questions to the BOT [in future searches].

In what ways will you facilitate a university president search differently in the future?

What does OSU need to do to prevent another hiring catastrophe like this one?

What was the hiring process? What needs to change about this process to prevent information like this from being missed?

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

Trustees, what responsibility do you take for this crisis?

There is a deep sense of betrayal about the hiring process. This doesn't live up to the ideals of equity and inclusion that we say we value as an institution and a community.

Do you recognize that sexual assault or harrassment is one trauma, but that when the surrounding community responds inadequately, that this compounds the trauma for the victim? What responsibility do you think the Board holds to trauma survivors? If the Board does not act, what does that communicate to students and the OSU community?

How can we avoid this issue with search firms in future hires? What is the responsibility of the firm if the information has not fully been reported? What do we specifically ask the search firm? At what point was this bubbling up? What kind of background checks do we request and what are we willing to accept as a university if these claims were not in an FBI or criminal report?

Concerns arose during the search that final presidential candidates were never presented to the OSU campus. The Board of Trustees should be the stewards of the university culture and ideals. Much of the information in the LSU audit was known and available in the news media at the time the hiring decision was made. Given this, why did the Board proceed with the hire?

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Board of Trustees, how will you hold the President accountable for future actions at OSU?

Alexander's contract says he can be fired for conduct that harms or embarrasses the university. Does Pres Alexander or the Board think that this is what is happening?

Even if Pres Alexander leaves, this doesn't end our work. We need to hold our Board accountable.

How do you plan to hold the President accountable for his actions at LSU? How much will his positional power influence the form of accountability? Is this approach commensurate with the accountability expected of first-generation, low-income and BIPOC students whose academic careers are derailed for minor infractions?

## **CHARACTER**

To the BOT: what made him stand out over the other candidates and what specific knowledge did they have related to this issue at LSU?

Are we assuming benevolence of white men (that he really didn't know what was happening at LSU)? Would a person of color be immediately fired if something like this came out about them?

I would also like to bring this issue to the Board. Did they do due diligence? It was highly unusual that they appointed a president who, at his stage of career, had already been a president at several universities. This would raise some red flags yet the Board proceeded with the appointment. If there are also problems with the process and execution of the search at OSU Board levels, particularly given the closed-door nature of key parts of the process (in contrast to the process used during the Ed Ray recruitment) - why? The Board should answer questions about that too.

What would make us believe there isn't someone else out there better suited to lead?

Most search firms ask candidates if they have anything in their background to disclose that would be embarrassing or harmful to the community. Was this asked of him, and if so, did he talk about this situation?

## **BOARD'S RESPONSE**

Trustees, how will you decide whether to continue President Alexander's employment? Is termination for cause an option being considered?

Will you conduct your own investigation?

What will need to transpire for you to take action to remove Alexander from his role as President of OSU?

Do you still support Alexander as president of OSU?

Why would retaining the President be warranted in this case?

What is the Board doing now to follow up this issue has come up?

What is the “red line” by which the President will be asked to leave?