

## **Presidential Listening Sessions April 28, 2008**

Attending were:

Dr. Thomas Meredith, Commissioner, Institutions of Higher Learning  
Trustee Amy Whitten, President of the Board  
Board member, Doug Rouse

Board Search Committee:

Trustee Scott Ross, Chairman  
Trustee Ed Blakeslee  
Trustee Aubrey Patterson  
Trustee Robin Robinson  
Trustee C. D. Smith

### **Schedule of Events**

1. Vice Presidents and Athletic Director
2. Deans and Associate Deans
3. Faculty Senate Advisory Group
4. Academic and Non-Academic Department Heads and Directors
5. General Faculty
6. Bulldog Club Board of Directors
7. Professional and Support Staff Advisory Council and Staff Members
8. Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine
9. MSU Alumni Association Board of Directors and Former National Presidents
10. MSU Alumni, Community Leaders, and General Public
11. MSU Foundation Board of Directors
12. Undergraduate and Graduate Student Leaders and General Student Body

At the beginning of each session, Mr. Ross welcomed the group and explained that the reason for the Listening Session was for the committee to listen to what the various groups have to say and to answer any questions that the groups would like to ask. The committee plans to move quickly to identify a new President. Within the next two weeks, they plan to name a consultant and finalize the on-campus search advisory committee, to be made up of 25-27 members representative of various areas of campus. Dr. Meredith will choose those people from the names submitted to him. Then the plan is to advertise and accept applications throughout the summer months, to begin narrowing the list of candidates in early fall, and to interview and name a President by mid-fall semester. The beginning date for that person would depend on the position that the candidate now holds.

We must attract the very best people for the position. The applicant pool will be key to getting the right person.

He also said that Dr. Meredith and the Board members who serve on this committee are available to visit with various groups and share information regarding the search at any time. He referred each group to the website (<http://www.mississippi.edu/>) for up-to-date information regarding the search and the twenty-one step search process. Mr. Ross and Dr. Meredith encouraged each group to correspond with the Commissioner and the Board Committee with questions and comments throughout the search.

In each session, there was discussion concerning the confidential search process. In each session, it was reiterated that the only thing not made public about the process will be the names of the candidates or the names of the finalists submitted. However, the on-campus search advisory committee will have those names, though they will not share them outside the committee. This search model will be much like that used in the recent University of Southern Mississippi and Alcorn State University presidential searches. In searches where the names of candidate are released, it makes it difficult for a sitting president to apply.

There was an explanation of the differences in the last MSU presidential search and the plans for the current search.

The previous search process called for:

- (1) the on-campus search advisory committee to submit no more than five finalist names to the Board Search Committee
- (2) the preferred candidate was named by the Board one evening and was brought to campus the following morning for meetings throughout the day with various groups.

The current search process calls for:

- (1) the on-campus search advisory committee to submit at least five finalist names to the Board Search Committee.
- (2) the preferred candidate will be named by the Board one evening and will be brought to campus several days later for meetings throughout the day with various groups.

It is important that the correct persons are recommended for the representatives to take part in the interview process. These persons need to be prepared to ask the right questions of the candidates, and to know what they consider the appropriate responses from the candidates.

Mr. Ross then asked each group to share with the committee the qualities that they would like to see in the next President of Mississippi State University and to ask the Board committee any questions that they might have.

### **Session 1: Vice Presidents and Athletic Director**

Qualities:

- Particularly important to have some university administrative experience at the dean level or higher. Universities are about people. We have tenure, accreditation, shared governance, university faculty (a group of very intelligent but very independent, unique collection of people). The university is really a family. We have different constituents. Students, citizens, employers of our students - - these are all our customers.
- Understanding of university culture and acceptance of university culture - - if you are not able to take on and work in that type environment, it is very difficult to be successful.
- We need someone with an understanding of unique land grant institution. This is different from other university systems out there. We do more economic development work. That understanding is critical.
- Experience in dealing with outside constituents. Engaged in fund raising work. Dealing with others.
- We need stability.
- Some people think we need an MSU person. We need someone who wants to be in Starkville and in the state of Mississippi and has a track record for that.
- Vision for the university, articulate and enact that vision.
- Someone with broad based knowledge of a land grant institution or MSU, and also encompass the role of the land grant in a system with a strong understanding of how to relate to IHL.
- Somebody who has a broad based understanding of political dynamics of a state such as Mississippi so that they can operate within the state.
- Respect throughout the state and strong relations throughout the state.
- Most important word would be "trust". The new president has to establish that with the Board. Trust that he can take care of MSU as well as your respect. Trust within the MSU community and within various areas.
- Openness. Open with faculty, students.
- Access.
- We will never agree all the time - we'll have different opinions, but being open and really understanding the decisions the President is making is important.
- Unique passion for diversity. We are more diverse all the time. Faculty diversity, student diversity, different kinds of agendas on campus.
- Relation with local community (Starkville and greater Golden Triangle Area and state).
- It is important to have someone who can develop and maintain relationships with all constituencies that have been mentioned and have good communication skills.
- Love for this university, vision for what we want to do and how to move that vision forward - including a vision for research and what it contributes to the institution, state and nation. That is important in garnering support for research and support faculty in research.
- Experience and administration at IHL.
- Understanding the land grant services.
- Extension for education in the state.
- Integrity.

- Focused on success of MSU.
- Establish relationships with faculty students and constituents - - trust.
- Important to listen. Senior executives have an opinion, and they want to give their opinion. They want the President to listen and discuss it with them as we move forward. Their opinion is important.
- Understanding of the university mission.
- Ability to listen, communicate and ask questions.
- A friendly person is easy to work with. Then there are people who are very aggressive. At the moment, the university is looking for some stability and collegiality.
- We need a calming effect. We still need growth, but sustainable growth that is manageable without lots of reactions. Stable, consistent growth.
- The university itself does not need to be so tied to the person that is leading the institution.
- Unique skills in being able to marshal the talents already here. We have extraordinary people on this campus already. A good leader recognizes those talents and uses them effectively. The University does not move forward based on a single person's efforts. Someone skilled at doing that is important.
- Needs to be able to listen to the talents and expertise that we have. Build that communication that we have.
- Everybody will not agree with all decisions. We do not need someone that is interested in trying to make everybody happy but someone that makes people feel like they have been heard and their voice is being considered. People need to feel like the talent we have on and off campus is considered. Those decisions are long-term decisions that affect all of us.
- Enabler to allow people to do their job. That will take the university forward.
- Stability.
- Marshal the talents on this campus.
- Enable us to move forward in a very strategic and deliberate path.
- It is about MSU – not about any one individual and being focused on that on a daily basis.

Critical issues facing the university for the next 5-10 years:

- Every area faces funding. The state dollars are continuing to shift as we become more privatized on private dollars. Important to have the ability to ask for gift. That need is not going away. We need to know we can call on the president to help get the job done. We need to feel comfortable asking that.
- Hanging onto our faculty and employees. It may not be money – it may be resources. We need to keep the good people we have hired.
- Resources to recruit outstanding faculty and grow the areas. Have the resources to keep them. Resources not only in terms of money or people, but also in facilities. In research equipment, we must be able to upgrade. We must be on the cutting edge of providing our faculty resources to do research and to teach.
- Our growth is another important issue. We began four years ago to significantly grow the university. That creates its own dilemma. We must put

faculty in place, build infrastructure. It all relates to resources and applying those and put them in place.

- The challenges are prioritizing. Articulate the vision but also prioritize the resource requirements that go to make that vision a reality. Seek additional resources but continue to look internally to modernize and create efficiencies internally. We need to generate the dollars where we need them. Modernize the technology and grow the university but not necessarily growing every component of our university. We are willing to look beyond just our own boundaries. Keep the identity with the limited resources we have. Look at those resources.
- The Commissioner and Board have challenged us to increase the quality and quantity of baccalaureate degrees, enrollment, retention rates, and graduation rates. Currently there are issues with that growth. We need to do other things in terms of retention and graduation rates. We must continually look at that, but enrollment growth will be a challenge for us.

Comments:

- John Rush and Greg Byrne volunteered to share their database of alumni addresses and will share them with the Board Search Committee.

## **Session 2: Deans and Associate Deans**

Qualities:

- General attributes expected in any leader.
- Integrity and good work ethics.
- Someone who wants to be in Mississippi.
- A proven record in working with a variety of constituents.
- Is not using this as a stepping stone.
- Sincerely come forth and use their leadership role to lead us forward. We have talent.
- Strong – move us forward.
- We do not need any stepping stones.
- We need someone who will work with all of us and is dedicated to the job.
- Libraries are moving into many new areas in technology. The individual who comes here needs to understand that. We are responsible for teaching and research.
- Need an outstanding leader.
- Land grant institution is very important for recognition of importance of agriculture and engineering to this institution.
- Building and collaborating with strengths across the university. We have lots of talent here. Much potential. We can make great strides with the right leader. There is much talent to be tapped into. It is extremely important for the future of this institution.
- Recognize the importance of the Meridian campus and the Riley Center.
- We would like to have a president that would come to see us in Meridian sometime. And interact on a regular basis.

- We attend events on the main campus and would like for others to come here also. We want to be included in all of the process.
- Number 1 criteria for the new president is a strong background in academics, advocate for the faculty and students, promote research of faculty.
- Go to Legislature and talk about the needs of the faculty.
- Need a leader who understands what it is to be a faculty member and student and what we need to do our jobs.
- Set a bar for Mississippi State so that this university is the leader for all other universities in the state and does not follow what the other institutions do.
- Mississippi State is not well known outside the state. I would like to understand the importance of marketing background and address that. That might result in better funding from the Legislature and more information for alums out there. That might result in giving more money. That is very important.
- MSU is a land grant university. We want a leader that understands the needs of a land grant university. The research and the application of research and especially the outreach and extension to universities across the state.
- Understand academic program, faculty and the value they bring. A tremendous team is here for them. They can count on that team to accomplish all of those high values.
- We want what is best for the university and the state of Mississippi.
- Make sure that the person the search committee chooses is qualified to run a university and know how that university operates. A University has faculty members who are tenured in many cases, and they have the right to speak their minds. Someone who understands that system will be more successful.
- We need to have someone who is familiar with the operations of the university (with faculty, tenure, research, and all the things that go along with it). Universities are not run like a business. Many businesses fail throughout the year - - not many land grant institutions are closing down. Running like an air force base does not work. We need to run like a university.
- We need a president who really understands the natural resources and values of this state. We have many natural resources that impact the US. Must also understand economic and entrepreneurial standpoint.
- Very important to look at someone that would not be a short-term president. And someone who is not using this as a stepping stone. Longer term than 2, 3 or 4 years.
- We do want someone who is a leader and has respect. Will also want someone who respects what we do.
- Graduate education is important. I hope that our next president understands that part of what makes us unique is our graduate students.
- Need to understand how this university connects with people of Mississippi.
- We are not as well known as we should be outside the region.
- We are looking for someone who will come and put the university at the top of their priority list.

- We want to be competitive with other research I institutions that are in the top tier of Carnegie. We need a president who is concerned about quality and who will help us expand that graduate program, particularly at the doctoral level.
- We want a good president for this institution. We provide excellent service for the state of Mississippi.
- Someone who understands faculty and campus and vision of land grant is important.
- Being open and accessible.
- Does not do exactly what everybody tells him to do, but he does listen and is open to new ideas and leave things alone if they need to be left alone.
- Someone who understands relationships, takes seriously and engages with donors about the betterment of the university and not about their own projects.

Critical issues facing the university for the next 5-10 years:

- Sustainability.
- Carbon footprinting.
- Want this university to keep a leader in environmental issues in our state.
- University population size – where are we going? Important for that individual to have a goal.
- We do not need a change agent. Nothing is broken now. We do need a president who will listen to all constituents. There is a lot of frustration and anger; healing needs to occur.
- This university is on a very steep projectory right now. As Dean of Arts and Sciences, I am concerned that we will outgrow our resources. The university is on a path that is taking us to another level. Find the right person who recognizes that and deals with the extra students and with all the new programs.
- It is important for a new president to be a relation builder with our communities. Meridian and our campus work very well together and we want to continue to strengthen our ties to the two-year institutions that come to our campus and to Starkville. Work together for new programming and other issues that our state needs us for.

### **Session 3: Faculty Senate Advisory Group**

Faculty Senate President Bob Wolverton distributed a handout titled “Faculty Senate Presidential Search Advisory Committee and Professional and Support Staff Advisory Council Presidential Characteristics” (attached to the back of this report)

Dr. Wolverton introduced attendees at this meeting and then briefly discussed the handout.

- He said that it is extremely important that we choose someone who has come out of the academic world. The first item is “A tenured faculty member with demonstrated successful leadership at the level of a dean or vice president at a university”. To have a president with a background in academic is the most important.

- He also said that it is very important for the president to have familiarity with the missions and inter-workings of a land-grant university. We must convince the Legislature that we are different from University of Mississippi and University of Southern Mississippi. We are a different sort of university and we need someone with that background and understanding.
- Meridian and Riley Center are very important to us now.
- The ability to articulate a vision and goals for Mississippi State University is important to MSU and to IHL.
- In the area of decision making, Dr. Wolverton stressed that it is easier to touch bases than to mend fences.

Qualities:

- The President should realize the importance of students learning, and they are important to our world. We spend a lot of time advising and teaching and we want a president who appreciates that.
- Always remember the humanities and arts at MSU. Keep in mind an understanding and respect for the arts.
- Must be a tenured faculty member. Some have not been through the process we have been through. For people who have not done that it is a pretty hard process to understand. We are looking for someone experienced in one of our areas and can understand what we have been through and contribute academically to one of the areas on our campus.
- Remember the underlying issue of governance and self-determination.
- Our #1 item under "Frame of Reference" is #1 and a very important one.
- We have a need for stability at the university. We have a responsibility to show leadership. You need to identify an individual who will bring stability and leadership as it goes forward to the next decade and as it goes forward as one of the best land grant institutions.
- We need someone who plays for the name on the front of the jersey, not on the back.

Questions:

- Who makes the final selection of the campus advisory committee? Response: Commissioner Meredith will select the campus search committee from names sent to him from various areas of the university. That group will select from among themselves the group that will sit in on the interviews.
- Since Dr. Watson has already said he will apply, how does that affect the secrecy when you have one candidate already publicly announced? Response: That will not change anything in our policy about keeping the names confidential.
- If we have other names to submit, shall we send them to the Commissioner? Response: When we name the search consultant, those names should go to the consultant.

**Session 4: Academic and Non-Academic Department Heads and Directors**

Qualities:

- I hope we can clean this search from complicated situations. We need an entrepreneurial person for our president.
- Our president should have very strong university academic experience. His career should have been in universities. This should not be a second career.
- Should be a person with a commitment to university administration. You have to understand a university in order to run one in a way that will carry the institution forward. If that understanding is not there, regardless of other qualities the individual may have, he will not carry the university forward.
- The important thing about this search is about MSU – not the person.
- We need to find a person to carry MSU forward, but not in a career that will be capped with a nice position. We are not looking for someone capping a career with a royal position.
- The president must recognize the agriculture strength of this state and can build upon that. Economics began with agriculture and producing food. We need to build on that. We need to go back to our roots of agriculture, mechanics and engineering. Great also to move this state forward at education and economic development and agriculture. We need to build on this for the state and MSU needs to be a leader in that. We need a good leader for that.
- We need academic background. Need someone who knows university.
- Need someone who knows that we do have to participate in the world - - international business. Would appreciate someone who knows the world and how important foreign languages are.
- I would like to see our next president have a stronger connection with the town of Starkville and County of Oktibbeha and in general the entire Golden Triangle area. Economic development is important. Form a closer connection with the city and partnership. Town relations need to be improved.
- Someone who knows about branch campuses. It is important that the person have appreciation for the new opera house and the opportunities that MSU has in Meridian.
- We need a leader who will look at the state and know the state and help our elementary and secondary schools develop students that have the foundation so that we can bring them to the university and help the state. Some students are not ready to come to the university.
- We need consistency in our leadership.
- The president has to be all things: front well with the fans, alumni, students, prospective students, parents of first generation college students, and also with fund raisers. Strong interpersonal skills are very important and someone who will embrace what a university is and what a university is not.
- The president must have the respect of the faculty.
- This institution needs a president who completely recognizes that this is a land grant institution and all that that means. Learning, research, and service differentiates us from others. This should be of significance to our president and he needs to recognize what that truly does mean.
- He must truly see that in an educational program, we are second to none.

- He must also really recognize the responsibility in leadership through partnership. Partnership in advancing the institution and the state through students of this institution.
- We cannot afford a learning curve with our next president. We need someone who knows what they are doing and is here now or has been here before.
- We need someone who is entrepreneurial and has been through the ranks and knows what MSU is and is committed to it. Here now or has been here - - several people fill that bill.
- The next president must be able to communicate with faculty and students - - and it is a two-way street. The president has to be a listener.
- He must have a pedigree in higher education – having worked in higher education, extensive experience at a land grant institution.
- Good communicator – spokesperson for MSU and for the people of Mississippi. We need someone with those abilities.
- Someone who can build a team, consensus and support by empowering and trusting in the people who they have working for them.

Critical issues facing the university for the next 5-10 years:

- We need someone with a long range vision that plans to be here an extended length of time. Short term vision is important, but the real vision needs to be a long range vision that the university can adapt and grow and move forward for an extended period of time.
- Ole Miss beat us to the punch – with their green campus initiative. Larger global issues have been brought up - - broader category of sustainability. Generally, we need someone who is going to pick up world issues.
- Embrace what our university is and have vision for what we might become with the relationship of our state and our funding
- The second most crucial issue is in the area of funding. In order for us to advance, we have to build those budgets on the backs of our students. Someone who understands the system in which we find ourselves with limited resources and can operate and make the best uses.
- For a new president, one of the major tasks is to maintain the excellence in the faculty, staff, coaches that we already have. Our pay is low. Our packages are not as attractive as others. Our retirement system is not that attractive sometimes. You have to have producers in every department and every unit and we must keep them. The way to keep them is money. One way to come up with money is in endowed chairs. How are we going to keep them? That is a major task for the president. He has to be involved in that. The person would need to meet with that person and tell them how much they are appreciated. Our leader must motivate the faculty and staff.
- We see young faculty come in. We need better salaries – they get better support when they leave and go elsewhere.
- We need to give first year students the best faculty we have. It is rare for full professors to be teaching these courses - - most instructors at this level are graduate students. Our first priority is the students going across that stage with a diploma. The president must understand teaching and learning. Large

loads and high research components are problems and we lose faculty. They cannot do everything. They can go elsewhere and get paid more to do less.

### **Session 5: General Faculty**

#### Qualities:

- The president must know and be involved in the university. If they have no university experience, they do not understand the system. We are not a business and should not run like a business. First and foremost, they must have years at a university in terms of faculty and staff and others.
- I underscore the importance of having someone who has been a tenured faculty member. They must understand that process. Must understand the process of promotion and tenure.
- Not a micro-manager - - use the resources in the university. It works well at the department level. Use the resources of the university and not have their own agenda of micromanagement.
- Another aspect is transparency. The decision process and how they want access, various inputs from constituents and the weight they will give to that input. It is very important to us that we believe our input is important and that the outcome is one that we can continue.
- Someone who can unite us and move us forward - - that is where we want to go.
- We are beat up and relationships must be mended. It will not happen overnight. The next person who comes in really must work at mending relationships with alums, donors, and faculty. Does not need to be someone who will change things on us again. Must institute some healing.
- I would like to see someone for whom this is a dream job. They recognize and you recognize that we truly have something great at MSU. Someone who will put the institution ahead of individual career motives. Stay here awhile and loves this place as much as we do.

### **Session 6: Bulldog Club Board of Directors**

#### Qualities:

- Quick and efficient process. Learn from past mistakes.
- Listen to the different MSU constituencies.
- Fundraiser/communicator with charisma to meet all types. Must understand that MSU is no longer just a state-assisted institution.
- Committed to long term relationship with MSU.
- Committed to all aspects of university life.
  - Athletics
  - Students
  - Faculty
  - Administration
  - Satellite campus/Meridian
  - Alumni

- Fiscally responsible.
- Integrate university and local community/statewide.
- Understand intercollegiate athletics/not a revenue source to university.
- A passion and love for the university

Comments/Questions:

- The alumni do not have a lot of confidence in the process because of the lack of trust that is there. They would like to know the status of the process as it goes along. Ross reassured them that the information (as much as possible) will be available for viewing and responding on the IHL website.
- They strongly suggest that, in order to bring a long-term commitment to the university, this person should come from the MSU family.
- There should be an understanding that this person needs to bring more integration between the community and the university.
- This person needs to understand that support for athletics is not a direct source of funding for the university.
- This person needs to understand and appreciate what athletics can do and does for the university.
- Some other key characteristics that the directors would like to see are;
  - Good character
  - Good moral and ethical background
  - Previous leadership role in a university or in the business world
  - When this person walks in the room everyone should see him or her as a leader.
  - Someone who will work with the Legislature
  - Someone who will work with IHL and stand up when needed
  - Someone committed to finding the best teachers possible
- One member asked, "Are you open to someone from a non-academic field?"
- Ross responded that they are open to someone out of the academic field.
- Whitten asked, "What are some ideas that could bring some transparency to this?"
- Members responded that the finalist should be proud and want to be named as a candidate.
- Greg Byrne, MSU Athletic Director, and John Rush, MSU Vice President for Development and Alumni, stated they would share their databases with the board so that they could communicate with the MSU family during the process.
- Ross stated that one mistake from last time was the fact that the candidate was named and brought on campus the next day. He stated that they would be changing that process this year. He also stated that no less than five names will be given to IHL and the communication plan will be much better than last time. This will be the same process as Alcorn and Southern Miss used in their recent searches.

**Session 7: Professional and Support Staff Advisory Council and Staff Members**

Richard Swann pointed out that the document that had already been presented by the Faculty Senate was a product from the Faculty Senate and the Professional and Support Staff Advisory Council.

Qualities:

- Proven leadership skills with management issues regarding reorganization, compensation studies, departmental reductions - - things that have direct impact with staffing issues on campus.
- Taking an active role and evaluating our current salaries and structure and bring that into a competitive structure.
- A leader of not only faculty and students, but also of regular support staff. Someone that shows they care about those individuals and their needs. Someone that can take leadership in allowing support staff to move up to professional staff positions.
- Someone who looks at compensation studies. We see race and gender and the number of professional versus non-professional - - but no statistics as to how we compare to others in the southeast.
- Someone who understands the library and how important it is. And someone who can focus on our old equipment that is in need of repair. It is beginning to get critical.
- Important that he have experience in working with branch campus and outreach. How to benefit the university and opportunity to grow beyond the main campus issues. We are a larger family and need to keep it all together across our state.
- There are certain inequities in certain departments that are part of the life cycle process. Most recent staff and faculty have been hired at local current market wages and older staff were hired at lower rates. This creates inequities. The only way to get a raise is to leave and get hired by someone else.
- Would like to see a president committed to one of our largest assets - - digital media. We need someone committed to digital assets (video, audio, documents, research ports) on campus. We need a CIO, with budget authority and decisions for the entire campus. If we had all these things in one place, that would be a good place to start getting the word out about MSU.
- Embrace the tradition and history of MSU and at the same time lead us to new levels. Be the best possible MSU.

## **Session 8: Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine**

### Qualities:

- Has an understanding of land grant and understands the significance and how important a role it plays in moving Mississippi State forward.
- Experience and has grown up in land grant institutions. Forward-thinking that would move the university forward and understand that significance.
- We are an integral part of the economic survival and growth of Mississippi. Teaching (extremely important), research (need to be doing research for the people of the state), and outreach (we all have responsibility in that). The president must understand that we have three missions and we must succeed at all of them if we are to succeed with our peers within the state and outside the state.
- Tenure process is something that is very important. I underscore the Faculty Senate list and particularly the first item on that list. It is hard to get that with on-the-job training.
- The university needs a healing process after the anguish and angst we have been through. We would like to have someone that is going to help with that transition. CVM wants to support the best that there is.
- Integrity and validity of research that goes on. We need someone who does not need time to move forward. We do not want to waste time.
- Our trust level is not real high. We want you to say that everybody that you will consider will go through this on-campus committee. We want you to say that.
- We have to have a person who has an understanding of a land grant system in place.
- Must recognize that the faculty is already quite strong. We are a strong university and need someone to recognize that and work with it.
- If it ain't broke, don't fix it. You can improve but do not try to fix if it is not broken. Making rapid changes without expert opinions, it is difficult to deal with.
- The next president needs to appreciate our entire division. He should represent the extension. We want a president to represent all of our areas within our division.
- The next president must have a real understanding from the agriculture and outreach standpoint.
- MSU has benefited from community college transfers. The next president needs to work with Dr. Meredith and the board and the community college presidents and their faculty regarding their transfer. That is very important to us. The continuing education students are also very important to us.
- This person must understand what is a land grant college, the purpose of land grant college and how it functions. Important for research on families or the knowledge of research to increase peoples incomes.
- Improve the quality of development of kids through 4-H and it is critical that we have this.

- It is critical for the university that we have someone with a very good understanding of educational leadership.
- We in Agriculture are very passionate about the role we play at the university.

### **Session 9: MSU Alumni Association Board of Directors and Former National Presidents**

#### Qualities:

- Looking for stability. Would like to see someone here for 10-15 years. Commitment to see it through.
- Would like to see someone with understanding of mission of MSU and state of Mississippi.
- Leadership qualities.
- Think about the students and teachers and listen to them and do the things that help this university achieve.
- Stability
- Good business sense.
- Rapport with students.
- Accessible to the students.
- Long term.
- Committed to MSU.
- Openness in the search
- Fund raiser.
- Key to alumni, development, athletics, and all.
- A long-term person will heal a lot of our problems.
- Looking for stability. Looking for someone 10-12-15 years.
- Looking forward to having more openness and better understanding throughout the alumni community about how the process is working. We want to be represented throughout the search.
- The only way to be successful is to hire the best person. We passed over the best qualified person last time - - if you have the best person, we need to get him.
- I want what is best for my university and our university.
- Longevity - - we have had a number of presidents in the last number of years.
- Interest in the university.
- MSU is big business in Starkville and throughout the state. MSU needs a leader and a good one.
- You could not have found someone to better calm the waters and restore a feeling of family back to us than Vance Watson has done. Land grant institutions are unique in the kind of people drawn to them. We are unique in students and people who graduate from land grant institutions. It is important that you find a leader for us that understands land grant institution and land grant family.

- The state of Mississippi is unique in political system and other things pointed out - - we need someone that will be able to cope and understand the politics in the state of Mississippi.
- You have chosen an interim that can certainly calm the waters. You will not make everybody happy.
- Longevity.
- The previous president was more of an arranged marriage than a natural marriage. We need to try to stay away from that this time.
- It is important that the president recognize and value the Alumni Association and insure that the communication is open.
- One thing we desperately need is someone that is definitely committed. In the past, commitment was not too strong. In interviews it is hard to tell. After they get on the job, their commitments can change. People who are interested and would accept the job are the key. We need a pool of qualified people for applicants. You need to think about their strong commitment to come and stay here.

### **Session 10: MSU Alumni, Community Leaders**

#### Qualities:

- We want someone that we think will be here for awhile. We do not need someone that is looking at only being here 2-3 years.
- Think of someone who will love this school and not someone - - don't send us someone that will make us into an elephant graveyard. There is no place for that here. We have one of the largest operations of any entity in this state, including any corporation you can name.
- Give us a leader, someone who can know and appreciate the values of every person on this campus and not someone who sits in his office and simply dictates to someone else. Let him be a people person. We are not here to test anyone's ego and we do not want anyone here who is on an ego trip. If you can't help us, don't hurt us.
- Staff and students say that whoever is elected as president - - we should not shackle that individual with a weight to drag around that the process was cloudy. Perception is important. I would encourage you that at every opportunity that you have with us and others in the state - - do everything to keep the light on that.
- I want MSU to be a cool place to go to school.
- The president should have MSU ties. Should want to be here. Should have managed large budgets. Has long-term vision.
- We want a good person in here. If spouse is sharper than the man, that is good too.
- Would like to see him and his spouse be supportive of local community and United Way.
- Regarding the relationship between town and gown - - we are making fabulous headway. We need foresight to see the importance of the community and the coming together of community and university. Hopefully we can get someone

who will see the challenge with the community and that we get on a situation where we are looking through the same eyeglasses.

- Look at a person closely interested in working with communities so that we can continue on the very good pace that we have at the present time.
- We need someone with lots of experience. I hope that we don't get so dogmatic about the process that we hesitate to say we have the right person when he comes along.
- We need a person who can be the best for the university, can bring together the house divided, make us see the greater good, make us see that we can all be better when we get together.
- We want somebody that bleeds maroon, and this is where they want to be.
- From the business standpoint, someone who will treat this job like a business they love to run. We want someone that will wake up every morning and the first thing on his mind is that he cannot wait to go to work to be our president.
- I want to encourage you to consider asking questions concerning their interest in the community and work with the community and ideas for work with the community.
- We want someone that is passionate about MSU. Somebody that is one of us. Someone who can come in here and unify our family and move us forward. The right person can take us forward and lead us and make us better. We want someone that is one of us, that has the passion that we have as an MSU graduate, that can come in here and unify us and move us forward.
- This is a land grant college - - look in that direction in finding a president.
- From regional and national standpoint, MSU creates an image that we are proud of in Mississippi. Key is a leader - - someone that understands what this role is and also has passion to carry it out even in those difficult times. Strengthen bridges that are currently there but also create more. Relationship has to be important, but enable and empower existing staff and faculty. Mobilize the external forces as well so that we capitalize on those.
- "How much can I pay him?" is a critical question. Mississippi is a stepchild when compared to other institutions. You can come back to the alumni for help with that.
- I think this university family has a very good idea of who we want and you probably already know that. But, I do think that we need to feel that we can be heard.
- What we don't want is someone that will totally split us up like has happened over in Columbus.
- Can you assure us that the pool will be people whose heart's desire will be at Mississippi State University? It stung badly and it hurt to be called "Plan B". We want someone whose heart's desire gets up and loves to come to work. Someone who loves MSU.

## **Session 11: MSU Foundation Board of Directors**

### Qualities:

- You have already heard many comments today and I doubt that we can add any new points other than to emphasize what we have already. I hope that we have a person that is research oriented as much as anything else. That is what is driving the economy and that is basically one of the major colleges within this university. Bring depth, new industries in north Mississippi, as well as helping out in other parts of the state. It is critical to have someone to understand that.
- Meridian has a very good plant that serves that community and west Alabama very well. They turn out good students. The Riley Center is down there and is a very integral part of the culture and Meridian and surrounding area.
- Politically connected in Jackson and can hit the ground running. Politically connected and not spend time getting up to speed is important.
- Commitment to strong athletic program and graduates, students, and athletes.
- Must deal with athletics.

### Questions:

- How is the search committee identified, and how are they able to articulate the culture of student body of MSU? Response: We sent out proposals and we have eight responses to date. They will depend on the campus information to educate them about what we are looking for. The notes from today will be compiled into a job description that will be provided to the consultant.
- Is the search committee necessary if you have 5 or 6 people apply before the search committee is hired? Response: The board wants to make sure the 5 or 6 are the very best people available.
- Is the board better qualified to make that decision rather than someone away from it? Response: The advisory committee determines who comes before the Board – not the search consultant. The search consultant facilitates it but the advisory committee gives us no less than five names who they believe would be outstanding candidates. The firm does not make that selection.
- Once this president is chosen and contracted - - he is assigned responsibility. But what true authority does he have to discharge those responsibilities? Will he be free to manage the university and its support from all the way around (university, state, nation, country) to make those decisions in his group that he feels is best for the university or does he have to get approval? Response: He must work within the board policy and state law, but he has autonomy.
- Will you do a background check? Response: Absolutely.

## **Session 12: Undergraduate and Graduate Student Leaders and General Student Body**

### Qualities:

- The bottom line is someone who cares.
- I recommend that you focus your efforts in this search on an internal person, a person within the university or the SEC or the states that make up the SEC who understands southern culture, that understands the politics that make up the southern culture.
- The best leadership this university has experienced have been people who have come from within the university. I hope that extra consideration will be directed toward perhaps seeking out that individual from the university or SEC or at least the states that comprise the SEC.
- We want a president who is engaged with students, faculty, alumni, and the community. Genuinely engaged with interests that students have. Someone who wants to be on this campus in this atmosphere, and share the same love and passion for this university that we do. Someone interested in coming here.
- Someone who will really play an active role in the state, someone that is interested in being here for a period of time - - here for the long run.
- Love for Mississippi, but the person leading this university waking up every morning loving to work as President of Mississippi State University is most important.
- Someone that the students, faculty, and everyone can be proud to support.
- Graduate students are looking for somebody who cares. Does not have to be from inside this university to care. You don't necessarily have to be from here to care.
- We want somebody to respect faculty and students.
- We want to see this university keep rolling. We could move up a tier.
- Candidates who are considered should not be ashamed to say they are being considered. This university suffered greatly during the last process.
- Our biggest concern is support for our voice.
- We want to have a president who stays a long time, such as Dr. Khayat at Ole Miss.
- Change for change sake is not good. Corporations and military style do not work as head of a land grant institution.
- We need somebody that understands what a Mississippian wants, who they are and what they want to be.
- Open and candid dialog is the most necessary part to a learning environment.
- The person you choose is not necessarily the best leader with all the answers all the time. Academia is different from corporations and military. When you pick somebody, make sure it is a person that understands what a college is about and not just a really good looking resume.
- We want a candidate who sees Mississippi State as their highest ambition. For a president to make this their highest ambition, come to work every day trying to make legend for MSU - - not a legend for themselves. Not about creating a

name for yourself. It is about making a name for us because of what you have done for the university and for the students.

- We need a president with humility. A president who does not put himself before the institution. The past two years were used to glorify one man. We had indicators early on.
- We want a president who takes the *Reflector* seriously and the school as a whole seriously - - not just certain sections.
- We need someone who knows the politics and Mississippi in general.
- We need someone that will be long-term for the institution.
- Pick somebody that your grandchildren or great grandchildren will have for president. Think: Would I want him leading my grandchildren? That is very important. We trust you in this process
- Each group wants someone to meet their qualifications. Superman or superwoman attributes. Each group wants to bolster up what they are interested in. Someone who is open to communication and if not meet all qualifications, at least willing enough to try things and new ideas and how to do things.
- Open to the press. Sometimes we were not able to access the president. We were often directed to someone else when the president was definitely the best person to talk to.
- We do not need someone out of a military background who says “do what I say with no questions asked”.
- Play for the name on the front of the jersey and not the back of the jersey.
- Not on an ego trip or someone who wants to go to their other dream job. We want someone who comes here and says this is where I want to be and plan to stay here for a long time.
- We need someone who loves and understands the university, and that is obvious.
- We need someone who really understands how to connect the university and what we are learning in it to connect us to jobs in the outside world. Someone who understands how that link works. We need to count on that job being there when we get out of school.

#### Questions:

- If the names of the candidates are secret, will we know what fields they are coming from? Response: The people on the advisory committee will know the names. The campus group brings the names to us to select from.
- But could you share information about the candidates with us? Response: The job description will share what we are looking at. We will be looking at someone who is capable of the job. Preferably a sitting president. We will not be looking for people who have not had experience at the complex organization, who have not had the experience in running an organization such as this. We will take the comments from today’s meetings to work up that job description. We will try to make sure all of you have a conduit to have input.
- Will our representatives be able to give feedback to the rest of the campus? Response: Not names. You will have a dialog about the process. I see them

working with the people who sent them there - - but they will not share the names.

- Could three candidates make a trip to campus, not just one preferred candidate? Response: Consultants have told this board for some time that searches across the country - - candidates cannot afford to be in the pool if it is going to be made public. Donors may sit on their money. There are shifts across the country to confidential search. This could jeopardize a sitting president's job - - to go on an interview and check out another position at another institution. Pools started to decrease when the searches were done in this way.
- Why don't you set up a discussion board with backgrounds of candidates - - not names and not specific. The discussion board would enable people to have some input.