PRESIDENT’S COMMISSION FOR INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

This report is submitted by Alan M. Maynard and Paul Suk-Hyun Yoon on behalf of the President’s Commission for Inclusive Excellence (PCIE). It contains an executive summary followed by the raw data collected from PCIE commissioners. The executive summary attempts to distil the information and highlight themes generated. That said, please do not overlook the utility inherent to the verbatim responses.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What opportunities do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?
The respondents indicated a sense of positive current momentum regarding all aspects of the university including diversity and inclusion efforts. The desire to continue and advance that momentum is clearly important. Specific areas of emphasis include naming dominant cultures, normalizing mental health, authentic connections with students from the president, and study abroad programs. A strong theme within this question as well as the remaining questions is the clear reference to demographic diversity. Within the context of this question, demographic diversity should be seen as an opportunity to be invested in over the next 10 years.

What challenges do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?
There is a need for responsive curriculum and info management as well as support for non-curriculum issues. All this can be categorized as ways to illuminate the need for community building on this campus and beyond. As part of that, a strong sentiment around the need for demographic diversity was present. Within the context of this question, demographic diversity is seen as a challenge, but one worth investing in. Another dominant viewpoint was the challenge of budgets and affordability. Fiscal health of the institution is important and values-based decision-making should include that of access and fairness across the university.

What professional qualifications/experiences should the next president possess?
General qualifications cited by commissioners circled around the president needing to be comfortable with complexity and a capacity to engage with all members of the campus community and beyond. Specific qualifications included communicating effectively across cultures, experience in dealing with racism, an appreciation of student activism, understanding around the issues facing students today regarding mental health and sexual violence, and a track record of action geared toward diversity and inclusion including investment in marginalized populations. The key theme here is that the president should have a track record of engaging in difficult situations around inequality and should have the communication skills to authentically connect with all members of the community. The other key theme around presidential qualifications was the ability to fundraise.
What personal leadership characteristics should the next president possess?
General characteristics cited by commissioners included humility, sense of humor, integrity, honesty, vision, authenticity, graciousness, flexibility, being an expert listener, and comfort with complexity in ways that connect with all members of the campus community and beyond. The main theme here was capacity for transformational leadership and change agency. Specifically, the willingness to take a risk, to empower those around them, able to work under pressure, and be a team player or unifier.

What other considerations should the Presidential Search Committee bear in mind as we initiate the process?
Demographic diversity emerged again as a main theme. With the exception of Judith Ramaley, UVM’s presidency has been held by a long list of white men. Sentiment of commissioners was clear that having a president that identifies as being from a marginalized identity would be a visual representation of change and more in line with our institutional values.

OVERALL:
It is clear that this commission recognizes the importance that our next president demonstrates a value for diversity and inclusion. This is a pivotal factor, full of opportunity, and is timely for the institution. Specifically, the search committee is advised to place a high value on:

- A track record of effective, authentic transcultural communication
- Demonstration of change agency tied to a vision that includes action on issues of social justice
- Fiscal accountability that also demonstrates value for investment in diversity and inclusion efforts
- Understanding of and action taken regarding demographic diversity
Verbatim Responses

1. *What opportunities do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?*

**Respondent 1**

I believe the University has the opportunity to truly engage in the diversity and social justice movement both in its curriculum and its hiring and retention practices. I think the University should capitalize on the D1 and D2 requirements by incorporating an education that names dominant culture (white, male, heterosexual, cisgender, middle+ class, Christian, able-bodied, etc.) and assists dominant identified students recognize elements of dominant culture so that it’s better understood, noticed, and challenged to create a more inclusive culture.

Societally we are also faced with some daunting challenges based in mental health and substance use. The University has the opportunity to shift culture to normalize mental health as a factor in wellness that is everyone’s responsibility to invest in, and to shift culture specific to our expectations around substance use/misuse.

Connected to both of these challenges are shifts in perspective based on the needs of the current generation (iGen, Gen Z) who are significantly different from Millennials (i.e. their eagerness to do well and avoid mistakes; desire to make a difference; expectations for college; concerns over physical and emotional safety resulting in lower rates of high-risk drinking and increased number of non-drinkers (Twenge, 2017; Monitoring the Future, 2016). As a result, these students need careful instructions and more guidance (than Millennials), but are concerned about making mistakes, so will want to know what is expected. They also want safe environments, a nurturing atmosphere, and to know what is being done to create conditions that are conducive to learning (Broennimann, A., 2017).

**Respondent 2**

- In the next ten years, UVM would be well endowed with a lot of diverse capacities from different cultural backgrounds.
- I see UVM expanding its territories (new campuses) as a sign of productivity.
- I see UVM having other study abroad programs (especially in Africa) due to its diversity or community oriented focus.

**Respondent 3**

opportunities to build on our unique location, our engaged story, our community feel.

**Respondent 4**
To capitalize on the gains made by the 2 prior Presidents (Dan Fogel, Davis Center; Tom Sullivan, Central Campus housing and Move Mountains capital campaign).

**Respondent 5**

- Incredible location
- Highly thoughtful community of shared values around the environment, social justice
- Rich campus of faculty and staff with immense experience

**2. What challenges do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?**

**Respondent 1**

I think the challenges are what create the opportunities (question one). Issues of social justice and diversity will continue to be a challenge as UVM is still a predominantly white campus with a predominantly white male administration. As we continue to strengthen our diversity recruitment efforts, it will continue to be more important to increase our own understanding of power, privilege and white culture, as well as to integrate other cultures, forms of leadership, ways of doing, being, etc.

I think the expectations of students and parents are only going to increase in terms of student support, as well as curriculum offerings and educational systems, i.e. there will be an expectation that faculty will provide more support for non-curriculum issues and teach in a variety of ways that accommodates more learning styles and needs.

**Respondent 2**

- I worry about how UVM would be able to develop the curriculum to meet all the diversity needs of every identity group.
- I also wonder about how UVM would be able to develop within the current fast pace of technology alongside developing the human capital to meet the social as well as the business world.
- My final challenge is how UVM would get the qualified and passionate people (faculty, staff etc.) who would execute these curricula and keep the vision and mission of UVM without getting weary.

**Respondent 3**

- declining college applications from the region
- difficulty keeping up with the rest of the world in terms of diversity and ability to hear multiple perspectives
rigid divisions: not allowing a range of progressive opinions

continuing to make Vermont students welcome and increasing our racial and cultural diversity as a campus while maintaining budgets

maintaining strong programs and supports while budgets continue to be cut; many are already operating on a shoe string

Respondent 4

First, the demographic trends of fewer college-aged applicants for our core mission. Second, lurching, uncertainty, and unhelpful competition (versus collaboration) between units as a result of IBB. Third, effectively recruiting and retaining tenure-track faculty who bring diversity. Fourth, an aging physical plant, with many buildings that lack the architectural interest to attract donors who might fund renovations. Fifth, continued growth of student housing (to take the pressure off of units in Burlington). Finally, a realistic plan for tenure-track faculty in general to offer a teaching/research load that is competitive with comparable schools (we already require more teaching than most).

Respondent 5

- Rising tuition – affordability
- Protecting our liberal arts
- Homogeneous student population
- Funding

3. What professional qualifications/experiences should the next president possess?

Respondent 1

Experience in dealing with systemic racism.
Historical/proven investment in marginalized populations on campus.
Engagement with, valuing and support of University staff (in addition to faculty).

Respondent 2

- The next President must qualify by having an in-depth knowledge and personal experience in diversity issues practically.
- S/he must be able to communicate effectively across cultures.
- S/he must have some background in education and psychology in order to be well focused on the vision and mission of the school.

Respondent 3
appreciation of the liberal arts

**Respondent 4**

First, effective fundraising, which for me, starts with a compelling vision that has the right balance of continuity and innovation. Second, fundraising (joking—but not). Second—as per the above—that vision thing. Third, a track record of action geared toward diversity and inclusion. Fourth, an understanding of the role of technology in higher ed in general, but for UVM in particular (so a good relationship with our incoming CTO). Fifth, somebody who connects authentically with students. I think that Dan and Tom did (and do—I'm told that students really respond to Dan).

**Respondent 5**

- Demonstration of ability to manage complex issues around race and identity issues
- Understanding of the future of higher education – ie distance learning, creative solutions to tuition obstacles
- A breadth of understanding around the issues facing students today regarding mental health and sexual violence
- A demonstration of robust fundraising

**4. What personal leadership characteristics should the next president possess?**

**Respondent 1**

Willingness to take a risk; to empower those around them; to be more concerned with what’s helpful and supportive than with appearances (of the University)

**Respondent 2**

- He must be transformational leadership to be able to bring changes to UVM
- S/he must be able to work under pressure
- S/he must be a change agent who is very passionate about the progress of all students
- S/he must be a team player or unifier
- The emotional intelligence of the person should be at the level of expectation (and may be above “sea level”)

**Respondent 3**

graciousness and welcome

appreciation of student activism, even when tactics and/or strategy may
flexibility, comfort with complexity

Respondent 4

Listens. Comfortable with conflict and uncertainty. A so-called *transformational* leader who strives to give away power and autonomy, while maintaining a sense of being President.

Respondent 5

High emotional intelligence
Humility
Sense of humor
Integrity, honesty, highest of moral standards
Expert listener

5. What other considerations should the Presidential Search Committee bear in mind as we initiate the process?

Respondent 1

With the exception of Judith Aitken Ramaley, UVM’s presidency has been held by a long list of white men – it would be a visual representation of change if we recruited and hired a person with more marginalized identities.

Respondent 2

- The search committee should be open-minded for any caliber of people who will apply for this position. The person could be a black, a white, a person with disability, a woman, a man, young or old etc.

Respondent 4

I do not think it is cynical to recognize that these are perilous times for the so-called 'aspirant' schools. Honestly, I think that is our fate. I am not convinced that muscling our way into the elites is necessary. Naturally I would love to see us led by a woman of color. Were there one (or more) that was a good fit, then I don't think we have to torque the situation. But we should also recognize that, for example, we are not a HBCU. Also, if the fit isn't good, then it would look like tokenism-even if it were not.

Respondent 5

We have only had 1 female President and no Presidents of color. This does not represent our institutional values.