

Selection committee 'temporarily suspends'

The presidential search and selection advisory committee "temporarily suspended" its work Sunday, charging that breaches of confidentiality "have greatly impeded the search for an outstanding president of this institution."

The committee made the charge in a statement sent to each member of the Board of Trustees, the Steering Committee and the press. **(A full statement from the committee and another from John Bruff, chairman of the Board of Trustees, appear on Page 2 of today's News-Bulletin.)**

A story which appeared in the *Lansing State Journal* over the weekend touched off the committee's temporary suspension. Names of possible presidential nominees under committee consideration together with assessments of their abilities from committee references were printed in the newspaper.

The committee's statement called the assessments "inaccurate, misleading and damaging public characterizations."

Chairman of the committee, Robert Barker, also chairman of the Department of Biochemistry, clarified this week that "temporary suspension" did not mean the committee's resignation.

"They are not giving up the responsibility they have to the community at Michigan State University. They are simply saying they cannot discharge that responsibility under the present way in which it functions.

"This inability to deal in confidence with nominees completely destroys our effectiveness," he said.

He called the whole situation "a very sad commentary for Michigan State. If members of the committee are doing this, their concern for this institution is at a low ebb. If it is trustees, I don't think they understand the meaning of the titles they hold."

Barker speculated that someone may have reason to scuttle the process and has chosen this method for accomplishing it — leaking information to the press.

"The person may be totally opposed to the committee system and not wish there to be input from this broadly representational group," he said. "Maybe a person or persons believes the original list of nominees was the appropriate one or it could be that someone has an inside candidate and simply wishes to eliminate this institution's ability to talk with anybody on the outside."

Barker said he finds it difficult to rationalize the press role in the situation.

"The science community is challenged because it's told it should make ethical judgments about the kinds of experiments it undertakes — the kinds of devices it creates. I'd like to think that exact document holds for the press."

Barker said the committee has recommended a 3-way meeting among the Board of Trustees, the Steering Committee and the selection committee to determine the next step, but says he believes it is clearly up to the two bodies which formed the selection committee to revise the procedure.

"The system they set up for us is not demonstrably able to function," he said, "and we're saying that we find it impossible to discharge our duty."

Barker also stressed that there should be a mechanism in any revised process or procedure "which will allow appropriate roles in the process for the various constituencies that we represent."

Bruff's statement on Page 2 says that board members ". . . share with the committee grave concern over the unpardonable breaches of confidentiality."

His statement says the trustees welcome the intention of the committee "to continue its vital involvement in the presidential search process."

Lester Manderscheid, chairman of the Steering Committee, member of the selection committee and faculty liaison to the Board of Trustees said the groups are "exploring possibilities."

"We'll be available to interact," he said, "but the ball is in the trustees' court."

Advisory details position in resolution

Below is the full text of the resolution to the Board of Trustees and to the Steering Committee of the Academic Council unanimously passed by the All-University Presidential Search and Selection Committee on April 22, 1979.

Contrary to news reports, we have not abrogated our responsibilities, nor do we intend that the Board of Trustees pursue the search on its own.

The All-University Presidential Search and Selection Advisory Committee deplors the breaches of confidentiality and the inaccurate, misleading, and damaging public characterizations concerning several reported presidential nominees. The person or persons responsible have seriously compromised Michigan State University and have greatly impeded the search for an outstanding president of this institution. It is established fact that throughout nine months of serious consideration and interaction with over 200 nominees and more than 1,000 references by the Committee, there was no breach of confidentiality or release of privileged information. However, since November, there have been major breaches of confidentiality immediately following the meetings of the Search and Selection Committee at which several members of the Board of Trustees were present. These malicious actions have compromised the presidential search process and appear intended to destroy the credibility of the Committee.

Several weeks in advance of the December 1, 1978 deadline established by the Board, the Committee submitted a Recommended List of nominees to the Board of Trustees. Since that time, at the request of the Board and in accord with the Procedure for Selecting the President of the University, the Committee has continued to consider additional nominees and to evaluate their qualifications in terms of the criteria for the presidency approved by the Board of Trustees at its June meeting. At this time, however, assurances of confidentiality can no longer be extended either to nominees or to their references. Given this situation, the Committee considers it unethical to request the additional information or to seek the interviews that are necessary for informed evaluation of any nominees not already recommended by the Committee to the Board of Trustees.

Therefore, the Committee advises the Board of Trustees that we are temporarily suspending the search process. We recommend that the Board consult with the Steering Committee of Academic Council and with the All-University Presidential Search and Selection Advisory Committee regarding procedures that will ensure continued involvement of faculty, students, staff, and alumni in the search for the next president of Michigan State University. The search cannot be effective, however, unless the Board

of Trustees itself takes action to ensure responsible and confidential behavior on the part of its members, as well as on the part of other participants in the selection process.

All-University Presidential Search and Selection Advisory Committee April 22, 1979.

Board shares 'grave concern', says Bruff

John B. Bruff, chairperson of the Board of Trustees, today issued the following statement:

The Board of Trustees welcomes the intention of the All-University Search and Selection Advisory Committee to continue its vital involvement in the presidential search process.

Members of the board share with the committee grave concern over the unpardonable breaches of confidentiality, and we will do everything in our power to protect the integrity of the process.

The University is engaged in one of its most important tasks: the selection of a new president. Yet, one or more persons appear determined to sabotage the effort through motivations that are misguided and malicious. The disclosure and publishing of selective and unsupported information concerning possible candidates is not only damaging to the search, but it is cruel and unfair to those involved. This irresponsible behavior cannot be condoned or continued.

The widespread interest in the qualifications and record of candidates is recognized. It is for this reason that many University constituencies and points of view are represented in the makeup of the advisory committee, and that these are augmented by the individual attitudes of the trustees. Thus, a thorough, candid review is assured.

Leaking and printing of distorted information contributes nothing to this process. If we are to complete this task in the best interests of the University, everyone — committee members, trustees and the media — must exercise responsible constraint.