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13-member selection committee proposed

A 13-member committee — including all eight trustees — will probably serve as the University's search committee for a new president.

The committee also will include two faculty members, one alumnus or alumna, one student and one administrator at or above the level of a dean.

The makeup of the proposed search committee was presented to the Steering Committee yesterday and will go to Faculty Council Tuesday as an information item and to Academic Council Thursday as an action item.

The 13-member committee is actually a compromise hammered out after a four-hour board meeting Monday night where Peter Fletcher surprised his fellow trustees by agreeing to serve on a

selection committee where each of the trustees had equal influence.

In the past Fletcher had argued that he could not abide by requests for confidentiality and therefore would not serve on any selection committee. Monday he told trustees he would not vote for any president unless he participated in the process.

So he offered what turned out to be a surprise compromise — that he would serve on a committee and abide by the requests for confidentiality “up to a point.”

Consultants Ronald S. Stead and Frederic W. Ness of the Presidential Search and Assessment Service from Washington, D.C., had told the board the names of candidates must be kept confidential at least until the final

candidates visit campus.

The board faces a quandary faced by several other public boards in Michigan. The Open Meetings Act requires that the board function in public sessions. While applicants can be kept confidential, the board as a whole cannot, under the law, interview applicants in private. In other searches, boards have interviewed candidates in small groups.

Monday's session was called to hear the report from the presidential Search and Assessment Service on the qualities and process the consultants believed would lead to the selection of the best new president for MSU.

Ness, who met with the board Monday, reiterated the consultant's view that a small committee with a maximum of nine members would be most efficient

and small enough to keep names confidential. The previous search committee included 17 members, which the consultants argued was too large.

“I obviously think that all life is a compromise,” said Ness, when he was asked how well a larger committee might function. The board has asked the consultants to assist in the upcoming search.

At Monday's board session, several of the board members expressed concern about the amount of time it might take to select a new president, prompting Trustee Bobby Crim to suggest that the board appoint an Executive Search Committee of outstanding people who would have the time to carefully seek

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Selection committee

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and review applicants and expedite the search.

At least one trustee, Malcolm Dade, expressed strong interest in Crim's proposal, but the trustees did not work out a way to include Crim's suggestions in the final proposal.

While the trustees did not accept Ness' recommendations on the size of the committee, they readily accepted the consultants' recommendations that the final selection take just six months. The consultants recommended that the search committee present three candidates to the board by Nov. 15 and a final selection be made by Dec. 15. The Ad

president, the first of which was the relationship with the trustees.

In addition, the report noted that in many ways, MSU could be said to be in a stage of transition. . . moving from a purely land-grant university to one that combines the service outreach tradition with the demands of the large research university."

The consultants told the board that "in the perception of a number of persons we interviewed, the MSU Board has not demonstrated its full leadership potential."

Both those observations drew a written response from Trustee Patrick Wilson.

"We have an excellent Board of