

Board OKs confidential review plan for search

More than 100 people have either applied or been nominated to be MSU's 19th president, according to the consulting firm charged with helping the University make its search.

William Bowen of the Chicago-based consulting firm Heidrick & Struggles told the Presidential Search Committee at its March 18 meeting that of the 111 applications and nominations received:

- 22 are women.
- 27 are minorities.
- 35 are currently presidents or chancellors of colleges or universities.
- 42 are currently university or college vice presidents, deans or chairpersons.
- 11 are professors.
- 23 are in non-academic professions.

The search committee will meet April 8 to review the applications, following passage of a resolution by the Board of Trustees to hold confidential sessions to do so.

The board met March 18 prior to the search committee meeting to discuss the role of the trustees in the next phase of the presidential search. Trustees were looking for a way to participate fully in the search while maintaining confidentiality regarding candidates and complying with Michigan's Open Meetings Act.

To that end, the board unanimously approved the next step — identified as Stage I — in the search process, which calls for review of individual candidates by all eight trustees and nine non-trustees on the Presidential Search Committee.

The board's motion stated:

"The Open Meetings Act permits the Board of Trustees to hold executive sessions to review individual applications of those who have requested confidentiality. Decisions to exclude candidates, to prefer some candidates, to put some candidates ahead of others, etc., cannot be made. The members of the search committee may evaluate against the criteria, may compare candidates, may characterize candidates as strong or weak."

Trustees said that the Open Meetings Act precludes them from making decisions on candidates within an executive session and that they would continue to work within those parameters.

"Everyone concerned with the University is concerned with identifying who will be the 19th president," Trustee Russell Mawby said. "In Stage I, our responsibility is to ensure that in that pool of candidates we have individuals of the quality and the character so that we can ultimately make our decision."

The search committee is operating within a three-phase plan of organizing, searching and then making a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. May is targeted for the recommendation.