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Haverford's Dean Search Progresses

By Andrew Thompson

With current Dean of the College Greg Kannerstein '63 stepping down at the end of this academic year to become Senior Advisor for Institutional Advancement, a search for his replacement is underway. The goal of the recently formed search committee is to work with search consultant firm Witt Kieffer to find a suitable replacement for Kannerstein.

Chair of the Search Committee and Professor of Biology Judy Owen said that at the committee's first meeting, the committee members completed three main documents: an advertisement for the position, a community email, and the Specifications Document, which expressly quantifies the duties and necessary qualities for the job of Dean. The committee also decided that the position would be advertised on the Search Committee's website and in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

"*Chronicle* is the first place anyone would look for an administrative position," said Owen.

Though the student members of the committee had not been appointed at the time of the first meeting, Students' Council members Nicole Benson '09 and Graeme Harcourt '10 attended the meeting to ensure student representation. Adam Lewis '10, Marla Yee '09, and Manny Zegeye '09 were announced as the permanent student representatives last week following the SC Appointments process.

Owen stressed that at this stage, everything is preliminary. All applications for the position are going through Witt Kieffer, and the search committee will conduct a conference call with the consultants on December 10.

"We can see every [application] online, so there is nothing hidden from us. [Witt Kieffer] will pull the best ones and do a preliminary reference check," said Owen.

Zegeye, one of the committee's student representatives, said, "Things will really start next semester."

"Now it's mainly the consultants," Lewis said.

Owen said that in the beginning to middle of February, the committee hopes to have six to eight "semifinalists." Then the committee will conduct "two full days of off-campus interviews," she said. "Strict confidentiality [of the applicants] must be kept in this stage."

From there, the committee would "quickly find a three to five candidate shortlist, and ask them to divulge their candidacy," so that on-campus interviews could take place, said Owen.

When asked what qualities she would look for in applicants, Owen said that her criteria were not exhaustive at this point, but she sought a candidate who had "intelligence of both kinds; intellectual and emotional," someone who was a great manager, and who had experience in student affairs and teaching experience at the college level. Owen also hoped to find someone who was a respectful listener, and "demonstrates sympathetic respect to student self-governance, and sees how integral the Honor Code is."

Zegeye said he would look for a candidate with solid experience, who could “mediate things [and] work with others.”

Of the job, Zegeye said, “[It’s] hard to jump into, a dean has to be a good fit.”

Lewis wanted someone who students would see as approachable.

“Particularly at Haverford, there’s so much interaction between faculty and students,” he said.

Lewis said he would also look for someone who “understands what Haverford’s about, but could bring new ideas from outside the Haverbubble.”

Owen said that President Dr. Stephen G. Emerson ’74 approached her about serving as Chair around the second week of September.

Along with Emerson, Provost Linda Bell, Kannerstein, and Haverford’s associate deans, Owen “had to decide what constituencies [to have on the committee], then which individuals to represent them.”

Owen said that finding committee members was a challenge, since appointments to committees were usually made in the spring.

“We looked for three faculty, representing seniority, distribution, and gender and race,” Owen said.

Professors on the committee include Associate Professor of Psychology Becky Compton, Senior Lecturer in Mathematics Jeff Tecosky-Feldman, and Associate Professor of Religion Terrence Johnson.

Vice President of Institutional Advancement Michael Kiefer was selected to represent Senior Staff, and Bryn Mawr Dean of the Undergraduate College Karen Tidmarsh was chosen to be a representative from Bryn Mawr.

Owen said, “[The associate deans] wanted to be able to interview the final candidates, rather than serve on the committee.”

Other staff members on the committee include the Director of Health Services Catherine Sharbaugh, Men’s Track Coach Tom Donnelly, and Deborah Saunders, who will serve as an administrative assistant. Marilou Allen, who normally serves as Affirmative Action officer to the hiring process, is a full-consensus member of the committee.

“It’s a cool opportunity,” said Lewis, “being able to work with faculty and administration.”

“It’s a fabulous committee, the whole idea of it is to represent everyone,” said Owen. As Chair, Owen said she is the “point-person of communication between the search consultants and the committee.” Owen also said her role was to be a “wise listener, and help [the committee] come to consensus better.”

Executive search consulting firm Witt Kieffer was hired to help with the dean search process. Two representatives from the firm, Vice President Dr. Jean Dowdall and Robin Mamlet, will be serving on the Search Committee. Owen said that Dowdall and Mamlet stood out among the consultants they interviewed.

Before working for Witt Kieffer and another search firm, Dowdall was most recently president of Simmons College. Mamlet was most recently Dean of Admission and Financial Aid at Stanford University, and is a former Dean of Admission at Swarthmore College.

“They knew immediately the Haverford ethos of student self-government,” said Owen. “In the interview, [Emerson and I] found ourselves using ‘when’ rather than ‘if.’ It was a very easy decision.”

When asked about the role Witt Kieffer would play in the search process, Mamlet said, “[Colleges and universities] hire us to guide, provide counsel, and assistance with their search. We come in and spend a few days learning the campus and culture. In Haverford’s case, that’s very important.”

Along with advertising the position, Mamlet said that Witt Kieffer will recruit candidates through their strong database and networks.

“The search committee then looks at that candidate pool and references, and narrows things down,” Mamlet continued. “It’s the back and forth that really makes up a strong search, that is proactive rather than reactive.”

The Search Committee’s website is at haverford.edu/deansearch. They are accepting comments and nominations of suitable candidates from all members of the community at deansearch@haverford.edu.

Owen stressed that finding a replacement for Kannerstein would be difficult.

“No one on campus has a keener ear,” she said. “These are huge shoes to fill.”

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