

Tools to Redesign the Presidential Search Process for Racial Equity

TOOLKIT

BENSIMON
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A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Although it is the standard practice of the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide to designate all racial and ethnic groups by proper nouns and thus capitalize them, Bensimon & Associates intentionally deprioritizes the term “white” by leaving it lowercase. This intentional action, a form of advocacy, acknowledges the longstanding mistreatment and wrongdoing inflicted on racially minoritized groups by historical and contemporary forms of white supremacy.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This toolkit is part of a bigger project on examining how existing presidential search policies and practices result in limited racial diversity among college and university presidents and racial inequity in who can become a college president. We interviewed sitting presidents in the University of California, California State University, and California Community College systems, as well as system administrators, search firm representatives, and other key stakeholders. In the accompanying report, *Whiteness Rules: Racial Exclusion in Becoming an American College President*, we demonstrate how “white rules” govern the search process and have shaped the trajectories and experiences of college and university presidents. We draw on our findings and extant scholarship on hiring in higher education in this toolkit to propose actions for creating a critically race-conscious presidential hiring process.



The search for a president is one of the most critical processes that colleges and universities undertake. It is the search for someone who will become the next face of the institution, a person who is expected to be an embodiment of the institution's core values, as well as the lead architect of the institution's future. Selecting who will sit in the presidential seat matters a great deal. Presidential search matters not only for the outcome, but also for the opportunity it affords to “unite campuses and inspire them to tackle challenges, make needed changes, and reach new possibilities” (AGB, 2018).

With white men continuing to dominate the college presidency and not enough People of Color, especially Women of Color, in these roles (Gagliardi et al., 2017), one may very well conclude that diversity, equity, and inclusion are espoused but ultimately empty institutional values, particularly at historically white institutions. Put another way, the continued lack of presidential diversity at these institutions—despite the increasing racial/ethnic diversity of today's college students—suggests that they seek, first and foremost, to protect white supremacy (Perry, 2020).

The protection of the racial status quo does not happen by accident, even in California, where the University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and California Community Colleges (CCC) are celebrated as paragons of progressive values. In our accompanying report, *Whiteness Rules: Racial Exclusion in Becoming an American College President*, we document how the process of becoming a college president is rife with racial inequities and how the playing field for Candidates of Color is far from fair. Candidates of Color are evaluated based on whether they look, act, and sound like the white men who have dominated

in the presidential role. They are often advised, or sense on their own, that they cannot be their authentic selves, and may even have to dampen the progressiveness of their racial equity and justice commitments. They have to know about and navigate the hidden rules of the presidential search process in order to be successful. They often have to check all the right boxes—and then some—to be seen as ready, qualified, and fit to lead. Even when they are more than qualified, they can be considered too risky a choice and be subject to racial and gender bias during interactions with the search committee and the search firm. Search committees, search firms, and boards—three key stakeholders in the process—have, at best, an uneven record when it comes to ensuring that Candidates of Color have a “good” experience during the search—whether or not they are selected.

There is a lot of work to do to make presidential search fair and equitable for Candidates of Color, in particular for critically race-conscious, equity-minded Candidates of Color, so that they have a real shot at being chosen. While the racial mismatch between college students (highly diverse) and college presidents (insufficient diversity) is a compelling reason racial equity in presidential search matters *now*, the fact is that Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Pacific Islander students have long deserved presidents who can represent and understand who they are. For far too long, racially minoritized students—as well as faculty, staff, and other higher education practitioners—have had to bear leaders—most of them white—with limited competency and skill in diversity, equity, and inclusion work. They cannot wait any longer.

WHAT IS EQUITY-MINDED LEADERSHIP?

An equity-minded leader:

1. Understands that institutions of higher education have been designed by whites for whites, and is therefore intentional about asking the race question as a standard practice.
2. Takes their responsibility to safeguard racial equity seriously and consistently.
3. Understands that they must acquire the funds of knowledge that will enable them to exercise critically race-conscious leadership at all times (Bensimon, 2018).
4. Acknowledges that developing the funds of knowledge that sustain equity-mindedness is intellectual and practical work—it is not about being nice, caring, or sympathetic.
5. Views the agenda of racial equity as a project centered on corrective justice or reparations (McPherson, 2015) for exclusionary and discriminatory practices (many of which persist today) imposed on People of Color.
6. Acknowledges the agenda of racial equity as anti-racist. Through their leadership they create the conditions to ask, “In what ways should these practices/policies be redesigned to be racially just?”
7. Accepts that the advancement of racial equity on college campuses requires naming and decentering whiteness.
8. Does not divert from an agenda of racial equity and justice to protect the feelings of hurt, fear, or anger expressed by white individuals who perceive a focus on racial equity as an attack on their identity.

*See *Whiteness Rules: Racial Exclusion in Becoming an American College President* for an elaborated definition of equity-minded leadership.

Based on our findings in *Whiteness Rules: Racial Exclusion in Becoming an American College President* and on best practices documented in extant scholarship, we have developed a toolkit that addresses five aspects of the presidential search process that are critical for de-whitening the presidency.

The toolkit concludes with an additional set of recommendations for enacting a critically race-conscious presidential search.

We see this toolkit as a **place to start**. Each tool begins with an explanation of why we focus on this particular aspect of presidential search. We then provide a brief overview of the tool and discuss the intended audience for the tool (e.g., search chairs and committee members, search firms, human resources personnel who staff the search, trustees). Our ideas and recommendations follow. We explain

how each recommendation advances racial equity.

Our hope is that stakeholders seriously engage the ideas and recommendations, genuinely consider whether and how they can be implemented in their institution’s next presidential search, and actually enact them. If the choice is made to *not* implement a particular idea or recommendation, our ask is that stakeholders have an open and honest conversation about why not. That is, if it is “too hard” to make a particular change, get to the root cause of why it is too hard.

We are mindful that changing a process as consequential as presidential search is not easy. The process is subject to policies, procedures, and norms that have been in place a long time and, in general, once something is institutionalized, reform is challenging. Presidential search is and will continue to be a zero-sum game: candidates either

become the president or they do not. Shifting the status quo, therefore, could very well have negative downstream effects for the mostly white candidates and especially white men, who are used to winning and who have enjoyed the privileges that come with belonging to the group that holds the most racial power in American higher education and in American society as a whole.

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TOOL #1

In Search of the Right “Glue”: Hiring Critically Race-Conscious Executive Search Firms

WHY FOCUS ON EXECUTIVE SEARCH FIRM SELECTION?

The use of executive search firms (ESFs) is a staple in presidential search. This hasn't always been the case, but over the past 50 years ESFs have turned themselves into the indispensable “glue” that holds the search process together. Using ESFs in presidential and other executive-level searches seems to happen without question (Wilde & Finkelstein, 2016).

ESF selection receives little attention: it is one small step of the process (see Appendix: CCC superintendent president map, p. 59; CCC multi-college district map, p. 65, CSU map, p. 72; UC map, p. 79) and, once chosen, only general details about an ESFs role tend to be shared. Yet ESFs are involved every step of the way, from building the pool of candidates to writing the leadership profile (i.e., job announcement) to screening applicants to engaging semi-finalists and finalists. ESFs essentially structure and coordinate the entire hiring process (Howard Perry, 2014; Lingenfelter, 2004).

But while ESFs “staff” the search and are given the task of ensuring the trains run on time, there is little doubt that their role has critical implications for racial equity. Whether this is recognized and acknowledged, ESFs can also *steer* the train toward or away from racial equity, as we found in our interviews with presidents and search firm representatives (see *Whiteness Rules*, Finding 6) And while ESFs have placed more Candidates of Color into the presidency over time, our findings show ESFs do not necessarily take a critically race-conscious and equity-minded approach to their work.

Which ESF an institution hires thus matters a great deal, as does whether they are hired to help with logistics, efficiency, and/or racial equity.

WHAT IS THIS TOOL?

This tool includes two main recommendations for establishing racial equity as a criterion for ESF selection. It includes supplemental recommendations for how institutions can work with an ESF, as well as ideas for what ESFs should and should not do to build a racially diverse candidate pool.

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

The recommendations in this tool are for campus and system personnel who decide which ESF to hire and who serve as a liaison with the chosen ESF during the process. Others who could be interested in this tool include human resources personnel and those who run logistics for the process, and ESFs, given that they would be asked to respond to the list of questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: DETERMINE WHETHER AN ESF IS NEEDED

Before asking which ESF to hire, institutions should carefully consider whether they need an ESF for a presidential search. Some argue that institutions shouldn't automatically hire an ESF and must understand what they are buying with an ESF (Kelderman, 2017; Wilde & Finkelstein, 2016). To this end, those in charge of hiring the ESF should discuss with each other:

- What do we want the ESF to do?
- What would the ESF scope of work be?
- Do we want the ESF to provide guidance and advice, or to run specific portions of the process (Wilde & Finkelstein, 2016)?

To these questions, we add:

- What will an ESF add to the search process?
- What is the advantage of *not* hiring an ESF?
- What is the value add of an ESF vis-à-vis racial equity?

As context for the last question, we suggest reviewing our findings on ESFs in *Whiteness Rules* (Finding 6).

How does this advance racial equity?

Responses to these questions will help an institution be clear about the purpose and role of the ESF, and especially what the ESF should be expected to work toward regarding racial equity in presidential search.

RECOMMENDATION 2: HIRE A RACE-CONSCIOUS ESF

Our chief recommendation is this: If an institution determines that it would make sense to use an ESF for presidential search, then identify and hire a race-conscious ESF. It is important to note that many ESFs are nowhere near being race-conscious and equity-minded (see *What is Equity-Minded Leadership*, page 6). Nonetheless, it is critical for institutions to assess whether and in what ways ESFs could bring a critical race-conscious lens to how they staff the search process. To do so, we suggest that institutions:

Establish a formal process for identifying potential ESFs for each search.

For the most part, institutions work with ESFs that are already on contract, or they return to the same ESF over and over again. Not only does this mean that selection is unlikely based on whether the firm has competency for racial equity in presidential search, but it means that the pool from which to draw candidates is more the same from search to search (see *Whiteness Rules*, Finding 6).

One way to formalize the ESF selection process is through a request for proposals (RFP). Unfortunately, most institutions do not issue RFPs for this purpose, and of those that do, fewer than half include detailed requirements. Some are only asked to provide a cost proposal, while others are asked to respond to questions informally via email (Wilde & Finkelstein, 2016).

ESFs play a large role in how college and university presidents are recruited and appointed. Our conversations with 36 presidents in California public higher education and approximately 20 other higher education stakeholders are summarized in the following observational statements regarding ESFs:

1. ESFs may include Candidates of Color in the pool solely to increase racial diversity, without regard for the likelihood that the individual would be selected.
2. ESFs may have a limited pool of Candidates of Color and lack a clear and consistent strategy for building the pool of Candidates of Color continuously.
3. ESFs, as predominantly white-led and -staffed organizations, may be susceptible to reproducing concepts of “fit” and “readiness” that advantage white candidates, especially white men.
4. ESFs, as predominantly white-led and -staffed organizations, may feel more comfort with white candidates and provide them more information than they might provide to Candidates of Color.
5. ESFs, for the most part, do not have the experience or knowledge to train search committees to decenter whiteness in the examination of applicants’ paperwork and in the interview process.
6. ESFs provide training on stereotyping or general forms of implicit bias, but their trainings seem to be short, superficial, general, and not necessarily applied to search processes.
7. ESFs may not have the knowledge to create interview questions that tap into the funds of knowledge of Candidates of Color.
8. ESFs, for the most part, rank candidates into levels or categories (e.g., green, yellow, and red or preferred, qualified, not qualified) for search committees. Their processes are a mystery, and some Individuals of Color suspect that their methods may be disadvantageous to Candidates of Color and women.

Ask ESFs to answer racial equity questions.

As part of the RFP, institutions should ask ESFs to respond not only to questions about their experience and how they work, but how they center racial equity in presidential search. This way, institutions will understand what they are buying in regard to racial equity expertise. We provide a list that is not exhaustive, but is a starting place for questions that an institution can include in the RFP to gauge an ESF’s perspective on racial (in)equity in presidential hiring, and their competency and experience in supporting the hiring of Presidents of Color.

To demonstrate how racial equity questions are different, we also present typical questions that institutions ask of ESFs (Table 1).

How does this advance racial equity?

Using an RFP process should expand the range of possible ESFs to consider for a presidential search, and may result in the identification of a firm that is not the typical go-to, but one with a steady history of supporting searches that result in the hiring of a President of Color.

Since most questions typically asked of ESFs are race- and equity-neutral, responses won’t help the institution learn more about its level of race consciousness and its history as it relates to racial equity in hiring. Asking racial equity questions, in contrast, would help the institution see whether ESFs could advance racial equity and diversity goals in presidential search, and would be less likely to reproduce the problems documented in *Whiteness Rules* (See Observations about ESFs, p.10).

TABLE 1. QUESTIONS FOR ESFs, STANDARD VS. RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS

	Standard Questions	Racial Equity Questions
APPROACH TO PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH	<p>What is your process?</p>	<p>Please describe your firm’s approach to centering race and gender in your search processes. In what ways has your firm advanced racial diversity in the presidency?</p> <p>How does your firm define and enact racial equity in the context of hiring college and university presidents?</p> <p>What needs to happen so that more racially minoritized candidates are appointed to the presidency?</p> <p>What training do you provide to search committees and institutional personnel to ensure that racial equity is centered?</p>
PAST PERFORMANCE AND EXPERIENCE	<p>Please provide a brief history of the firm and key experiences and qualifications.</p> <p>What value do you add in the search process?</p> <p>Can you provide a list of recent searches for presidents?</p> <p>What is your experience conducting searches in institutions that are similar?</p> <p>Please provide samples of work.</p>	<p>Please provide a list of the past 10 presidential searches your firm has worked on in similar types of institutions, identifying the race and gender of the final candidate. Please provide a breakdown of each initial pool by race and gender. Please include data on whether the hires are still in the position, and if not, how long their tenure was.</p> <p>What does your firm do to ensure that racially minoritized candidates are included in the pool?</p> <p>If your firm has implemented internal DEI initiatives, please share when those started and what the impetus was to begin that necessary work. How have your searches been improved because of these initiatives?</p>

	Standard Questions	Racial Equity Questions
PAST PERFORMANCE AND EXPERIENCE CONTINUED	<p>Please provide a brief history of the firm and key experiences and qualifications.</p> <p>What value do you add in the search process?</p> <p>Can you provide a list of recent searches for presidents?</p> <p>What is your experience conducting searches in institutions that are similar?</p> <p>Please provide samples of work.</p>	<p>Please describe how you broaden the pool and how you go beyond recruiting candidates who hold positions that presidents tend to have occupied (provost, vice president, vice chancellor).</p> <p>Once the pool is created, what does your firm do to coach candidates through the process? What tools or services do you provide? Are these tools and services provided to all candidates? How does your firm specifically support racially minoritized candidates?</p> <p>What specific strategies or coaching does the firm provide to invite and keep racially minoritized candidates?</p> <p>Please describe the innovative practices your firm has implemented to center race and gender in your services.</p> <p>Please describe your network. Specifically, please describe your network as it relates to racially minoritized representation. How do racially minoritized or women candidates become part of your database or pool by which you recruit?</p>
KEY PERSONNEL: EXPERIENCE & QUALIFICATIONS	<p>Please provide names and resumes of those who will be assigned to the search.</p>	<p>What is the racial and gender makeup of your firm’s consultants? What processes do you have in place to better represent the demographic makeup of college and university presidents?</p> <p>For each consultant who will be working on this search, please describe their experience in hiring Presidents of Color and woman presidents. Please be specific by listing the successful searches of each consultant.</p>

	Standard Questions	Racial Equity Questions
RACIAL COMPETENCE & LITERACY	<p>Can you describe your equity lens to guide the search process?</p> <p>What is your track record in recruiting diverse candidates?</p>	<p>Please describe what it means to your firm to be racially literate.</p> <p>What types of professional development (PD) does your firm provide for staff to develop racial literacy? Please be specific by listing the PD and the goals of the PD. Also list the name of equity consultants/organizations your firm has worked with. Please describe a racial equity issue that your firm has encountered in a past search. Why was this a racial equity issue? What did your firm do to resolve or address the issue?</p>
THE SEARCH PROCESS	<p>What is your proposed timeline/ agenda for the search?</p> <p>What evaluation mechanisms do you have in place to regularly solicit and receive feedback from your staff and campus stakeholders?</p>	<p>What does your firm do to ensure a fair and just search process for racially minoritized and women candidates? Please be specific and delineate what your firm does for each part of the process. For example, how do you prepare trustees and others to not default to whiteness or racial evasiveness?</p> <p>Tell us about the feedback that you provide to candidates (both successful and unsuccessful).</p> <p>Tell us about how you take time as a firm to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the prior search. What are the ways you are working to get better with respect to racial equity in particular?</p>
REFERENCES	<p>Please provide references.</p>	<p>In your list of references, please list at least one President of Color that you have helped hire into a presidency.</p>
OTHER	<p>What is your budget?</p> <p>Are there any conflicts of interest?</p>	

WHAT ELSE CAN INSTITUTIONS DO?

Involve the Campus in the Hiring of the ESF

The members of the campus community who have expertise in racial equity should not only be involved in the hiring of their new president, but should also weigh in on the hiring of the ESF. The inherent concern is that only a few individuals, or the same individuals, make decisions in regard to (a) using a search firm; and (b) selecting one. Institutions pay ESFs on average \$54,000 at community colleges and \$100,000 at baccalaureate institutions and research universities, with some exceeding \$200,000 with administrative and indirect costs (Seltzer, 2016). Due to this monetary and time investment, it makes sense to involve the campus in ESF selection.

Rotate Search Firms

One of the findings of this study is that all three public systems of higher education in California tend to hire the same search firms time and time again, with mixed results. This occurs for formal reasons, when systems set up pre-existing agreements with specific firms, or informally, when institutions and their leaders develop relationships with firms and go back to them multiple times. Regardless, Bensimon & Associates argues that institutions should make it a policy to rotate or seek new search firm talent for subsequent searches.

Rotating ESFs may help to eliminate the “recruitment bias” (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 6). While ESFs have created large databases of potential candidates and have different networks by which to recruit candidates, rotating ESFs for subsequent searches can help to offset the risk of having similar pools of candidates. Institutions should also keep records of evaluations of the search-firms. Key stakeholders must seek feedback regarding the pros and cons of the search firm during the process.

WHAT CAN ESFs DO NOW?

Intentionally Build a Pool that is Fair and Just for Racially Minoritized and Women Candidates

One primary responsibility of an ESF is to recruit candidates into the pool of potential hires. Our research identified the potential racial pitfalls in many of these processes (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 6). In Table 2, we list “Don’ts and Dos” for creating a racially fair and just method for building a diverse pool of candidates.

TABLE 2. ESF DOS AND DON'TS FOR BUILDING A DIVERSE POOL

Don'ts	Dos
<p>Don't use Candidates of Color or women as “window dressing”—meaning they are only included in the pool to increase the diversity. This practice does harm.</p>	<p>Do include Candidates of Color and women in the pool who can compete and do the job—even if their resume lacks traditional, white-centered experiences and credentials.</p>
<p>Don't allow the burden of “getting on the search firm's radar” to be placed on Candidates of Color or women. Currently, getting on the radar requires networking, approaching search firm representatives at conferences, or cold-calling the search firm to “throw their name in the ring.” These practices, while not exhaustive, are steeped in whiteness.</p>	<p>Do provide multiple avenues and outreach methods that take the burden of getting on the firm's radar away from Candidates of Color and women, and place more of the responsibility on the ESF. Work closely with professional development programs that focus on Leaders of Color and with racial/ethnic-focused associations such as <i>Excelencia</i> in Education, United Negro College Fund, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, APIA Scholars Fund, and Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.</p> <p>Do create a repository of potential candidates by putting out a call for individuals to submit their qualifications. Write the call-in language that signals “racial diversity” wanted.</p>
<p>Don't establish the criteria for the presidency until there is an understanding of the potential pool of Candidates of Color and woman candidates. Criteria can exclude Candidates of Color and women, so the balance of creating the criteria vs. the pipeline is delicate.</p>	<p>Do understand the pool of Candidates of Color and women before creating the criteria. Shifting the sequence of operations will likely result in criteria that include rather than exclude racially minoritized and woman candidates.</p>
<p>Don't push a certain number of candidates on the search committee.</p>	<p>Do remember that ESFs support the search process, and if the search committee is unhappy with the pool, then search consultants will need to find more viable candidates.</p>
<p>Don't go through the motions and forget to address the nuanced needs of the institution.</p>	<p>Do proactively partner with programs that have been successful in helping women and People of Color, learn from them, and then recruit from their participants.</p>

Assemble the Right Squad: Centering Racial Equity in Search Committee Formation

WHY FOCUS ON SEARCH COMMITTEE FORMATION?

Search committees can be gatekeepers or gateways to racial equity in presidential search. Currently, the main logic underlying search committee formation is stakeholder representation (see Appendix: CCC superintendent president map, p. 60; CCC multi-college district map, p. 66, CSU map, p. 72-73; UC map, p. 80). While stakeholder representation can help ensure that key constituent groups (e.g., students, staff, faculty, alumni, trustees, community) have a voice in who will become the next president, the fact is that stakeholder representation is not designed to promote racial equity in the hiring process, nor in hiring outcomes.

Research tells us that search committee members, despite implicit bias training, routinely make biased appraisals based on underlying assumptions, beliefs, and norms, and as such filter out candidates who they don't think are qualified or are a fit for the role (Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Liera & Ching, 2020). Furthermore, members' social identities and position in the academic hierarchy can shape whether and how they prioritize racial equity in hiring (Hakkola & Dyer, 2022). Our findings in *Whiteness Rules* (Finding 5) show how search committees can transmit racialized, gendered, and ageist messages to candidates, as well as place Candidates of Color in a position of having to placate the comfort and feelings of white committee members.

Given this evidence, it matters *who* sits on a search committee and whether members have the critical race-consciousness and equity-mindedness to ensure that racial equity is centered in presidential search.

WHAT IS THIS TOOL?

This tool includes five recommendations for advancing racial equity while working with the current logic of stakeholder representation in composing search committees. We offer two kinds of recommendations: (1) "first step" recommendations that help prioritize the selection of committee members who understand how racial bias creates an uneven playing field for Candidates of Color; and (2) "next step" recommendations that prioritize the selection of committee members who understand how white rules impact the hiring of Presidents of Color. Each recommendation comes with an explanation of how it advances racial equity, as well as what to keep in mind during implementation.

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

Our recommendations are for search committee chairs, since they play a crucial role in composing the search committee. In the UC and CSU, the system heads and board chairs solicit nominations from stakeholder leaders (e.g., academic senate leaders, student government leaders) and appoint members. In multi-district community colleges, the district chancellor and district board of trustees accomplish this task. And in single-district community colleges, search committee appointments are up to the board of trustees.

Others interested in this tool include: campus governance leaders and others from whom the search chair seeks nominations for potential committee members; human resources personnel and others who staff the search committee; executive search firms, since they work closely with the search committee; and boards of trustees, given that they must approve/accept the recommendation for president.

FIRST-STEP RECOMMENDATIONS

Racial equity in presidential search needs search committee members who at minimum understand how implicit racial bias can impact decision-making generally, and hiring and search process more specifically. For example, they can see that the accomplishments and qualifications of Candidates of Color are routinely discounted even when their CVs are equal to or more impressive than white candidates (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 5), and that during interviews, Candidates of Color are subjected to biased interpersonal dynamics that white candidates are less likely to face [Finding 5, *Under the Veil*]. Members' understanding could come from research and/or experience, and should help ensure that Candidates of Color have a real opportunity to become a president.

RECOMMENDATION 1: ENSURE RACIAL/ETHNIC AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN SEARCH COMMITTEES

Prioritize racial/ethnic and gender diversity in committee membership representation. At minimum, 50% of committee membership should be individuals with racial/ethnic and gender-minoritized identities who represent the range of stakeholder groups: faculty, student, trustees, community members and alumni.

How does this make search committee formation racially equitable?

Selection that is based solely on stakeholder representation can be racially inequitable if the pool from which potential members are drawn is largely white. For example, faculty are a key stakeholder group. At many institutions, including those in California, faculties are predominantly white. As such, academic governance leaders are more likely to nominate white faculty. Explicit direction to include a robust number of Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and/or Pacific Islander members counters this tendency.

Having a predominantly white committee can be detrimental to the chances of Candidates of Color for the role. The limited presence of People of Color on the committee is a signal. To Candidates of Color it signals that, in all likelihood, they are being evaluated by a committee that has little first-hand experience of racial minoritization within and outside academia. It signals that racial/ethnic diversity is not highly valued at this institution. It signals that white people and white interests are the norm. Taken together, this can lead Candidates of Color to wonder whether those responsible for the search are serious about hiring a President of Color and whether the institution is ready for a President of Color.

In contrast, white candidates benefit from a majority-white search committee. Facing committee members whose racial identity and experiences are more or less congruent with their own, white candidates are more likely to feel that they are being evaluated on their individual accomplishments and qualities. Whether they succeed or fail in the search is less an issue of their race/ethnicity than their qualifications and fit for the job.

Having robust racial/ethnic diversity on a committee can guard against racial unfairness.

Keep in mind:

While the number of racially minoritized faculty, staff, and administrators is growing, the fact is that the number is not growing fast enough. Practitioners of Color often have greater formal and informal service loads compared to their white colleagues (Cleveland et al., 2018). While serving on a presidential search committee is important and meaningful service, be aware that Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and/or Pacific Islander practitioners are likely stretched thin.

RECOMMENDATION 2: MAKE EXPERIENCE DOING RACIAL DIVERSITY AND EQUITY WORK A KEY SELECTION CRITERION

Prioritize individuals who have knowledge (scholarly and practical) and experience doing racial diversity and equity work, especially in the areas of recruitment, hiring, and retention. This could include faculty who do research in this area, and staff and faculty who are involved in campus diversity and equity efforts.

How does this make search committee formation racially equitable?

Committee members with this knowledge and experience are well poised to help monitor and disrupt evaluations that undercut and delegitimize the accomplishment and qualifications of Candidates of Color for the role (Liera, 2020a). In so doing, they can help ensure that candidate evaluations are based on agreed-upon criteria, and that key decisions are deliberated with intention and are not hastily made based on the opinion of the loudest and most powerful members. Veering from criteria and jumping to conclusions based on little information are two ways that implicit bias shows up in selection processes, and these biases have particularly negative effects for candidates who hold racial/ethnic and gender-minoritized identities (Milkman et al., 2012; Staats et al., 2015).

RECOMMENDATION 3: REQUIRE NOMINATORS TO JUSTIFY COMMITTEE MEMBER NOMINATIONS

When seeking nominations, explicitly state that racial/ethnic and gender diversity, along with knowledge and experience doing racial diversity and equity work, are key criteria for committee membership, along with stakeholder representation. Require nominators to provide a rationale for each person they put forth as a potential committee member. Sample guiding questions include:

- In what ways will this person add value to the presidential search committee?
- What expertise, experience, and viewpoints would they bring to the process? Why are these important in the search for the institution's next president?
- If not covered in the question above, what is this person's expertise and experience with racial diversity and equity work, if any?
- What are this person's racial/ethnic and gender identities?

Use the rationales provided to inform committee member selection.

How does this make search committee formation racially equitable?

Asking stakeholder leaders why they are nominating a person for the search committee helps achieve racial fairness in two ways. First, the questions ask them to provide the information needed to achieve recommendations 1 and 2. Second, the questions force them to slow down their selection process and choose potential committee members with intention. This helps mitigate implicit bias.

EXAMPLE EQUITY ADVOCATE/ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Adapted from Center for Urban Education (2017), Liera (2020a; 2020b), UCSF (2022).

- Support the search chair in ensuring the search process is racially equitable.
- Provide just-in-time racial equity guidance (e.g., on how to build a diverse candidate pool and how to write an equity-minded position announcement).
- Monitor for and address racial bias and/or microaggressions committed against candidates (i.e., during interviews or campus visits) and between committee members (e.g., during application review or committee deliberations).
- Disrupt group-think patterns by asking questions that push committee members to re-assess their initial conclusions about Candidates of Color.
- Ensure that during candidate review, committee members ground their assessments in agreed-upon evaluation criteria, and that their interpretation of candidate qualifications does not vary by race/ethnicity and gender.
- Also ensure that candidate evaluation is based on inclusion: encourage committee members to articulate how Candidates of Color meet the desired qualifications for the job and why they would keep Candidates of Color in the pool.
- Review semi-finalist and finalist lists for robust racial/ethnic and gender representation.

INVOLVE THE EQUITY ADVOCATE/ADVISOR AT EVERY STAGE OF THE SEARCH COMMITTEE FORMATION PROCESS.

- Begin by meeting with the equity advocate/advisor to review how racial (in)equity shows up in candidate recruitment and selection.
 - Seek their input on the guiding questions noted in Recommendation 3: Do they need to be re-framed in any way? Must other questions be added for *this* search?
 - Seek their feedback on the responses to the guiding questions.
 - Have them review the proposed search committee membership list for racial/ethnic and gender balance and racial equity expertise.
-

NEXT-STEP RECOMMENDATIONS

For presidential search to be racially just, committees should include members who can see how this process is racialized and normed to white rules, and how leadership can and should be representative of the ever-increasing racial and gender diversity on college campuses (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 4). Members who bring this understanding to the search process can—in addition to the above—help ensure that Candidates of Color will be seen for the fullness of their qualities, values, experience, accomplishments, and leadership approach, and not be judged against traditional white rules of what it means to be “presidential.”

RECOMMENDATION 4: MAKE CRITICAL RACE CONSCIOUSNESS AND EQUITY-MINDEDNESS KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

Prioritize individuals who work from a critically race-conscious and equity-minded lens. Add to the guiding questions in Recommendation 3:

- Does this person have the positional authority and power to challenge search committee practices that detract from Candidates of Color?
- Does this person routinely notice and question racial patterns in academic life?
- Has this person written about or done work on how policies and practices perpetuate white advantage and/or fail racially minoritized people, ideally in higher education?

How does this make search committee formation racially equitable?

Such practitioners are keenly aware of how routine hiring practices are designed to privilege white candidates (Bensimon, 2018; Liera, 2020a). This goes beyond the idea that hiring practices can have racialized effects; this is about recognizing that hiring practices—in their intent and enactment—are racially exclusive. Racial justice in hiring requires committee members who work from this epistemological position, so that they can help the committee think about how merit/qualifications and “fit” are constructed and enacted (Liera & Ching, 2020).

RECOMMENDATION 5: INCLUDE AN EQUITY ADVOCATE ON THE COMMITTEE

Include an “equity advocate” or “equity advisor” on the search committee who will serve in an *ex officio* capacity. Equity advocates/advisors are campus practitioners (faculty, staff, administrators) who are trained to monitor search process and outcomes, disrupt exclusionary hiring practices when needed, and advance critically race-conscious and equitable hiring approaches.

How does this make search committee formation racially equitable?

Even when search committee members have knowledge about and experience doing racial equity work, even when they work from a critically race-conscious and equity-minded position, they are not infallible. The norms of whiteness are so powerful and pervasive that they happen naturally, and it takes effort to notice their enactment as they are happening. Equity advocates/advisors provide the needed accountability to ensure that Candidates of Color experience a racially fair and just process. They can provide laser-like focus on this task.

Keep in mind:

To ensure that their guidance is taken seriously and that they have the authority to hold the committee accountable to racial equity, equity advocates/advisors should come from the senior ranks at a campus or in a system. They could be tenured full professors, deans and vice presidents, and directors (as they are at [the University of California, San Francisco](#)), as well as individuals who may not have a formal title that denotes their seniority but who hold informal power in the organization. Academia’s hierarchical organization can mitigate the agency of equity advocates/advisors to hold committee members and committee chairs to account (Liera & Hernandez, 2021). Particularly when the search chair is the system head and the committee includes the chair and members of the board of trustees, it is crucial for equity advocates/advisors to maintain their independence.

Equity advocates/advisors require training, which thus requires investment on the part of the system or community college district.

Beyond Compositional Diversity and Implicit Bias: Training Search Committees for Racial Equity in Presidential Hiring

WHY FOCUS ON SEARCH COMMITTEE TRAINING?

Diversity, equity, and inclusion training (hereafter, DEI training) for search committees is a standard operating procedure in presidential search (see Appendix: CCC superintendent president map, p. 60; CCC multi-college district map, p. 66, CSU map, p. 76; UC map, p. 83). DEI training typically covers the importance of compositional diversity and the challenges of implicit bias. Despite this training, the presidency continues to be compositionally white, and candidates continue to experience racial and gender bias in the search process (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 5).

Furthermore, DEI training rarely connects implicit bias with systemic racism and white supremacy, with the white rules that govern presidential search (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 4), and with the white-man archetype of presidential leadership (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 1). And even though hiring is a structure rife with racial meanings that advantage white candidates and disadvantage Candidates of Color (Griffin, 2020; Liera & Hernandez, 2021; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; White-Lewis, 2020), this is rarely a lesson covered in DEI training.

Decoupling implicit and systemic biases in training materials and not providing contextualized training for search committees means that search committee members may be ill-equipped to advance racial equity in presidential hiring. Left unchecked, search committee preferences could steer evaluation criteria and the application of those criteria in ways that advantage their favorite job applicants, who often share professional, racial, gender, and other social backgrounds (Liera & Hernandez, 2021). Despite their best intentions, search committees could thus protect white supremacy by normalizing whiteness in the form of implicit biases (O'Meara et al., 2020; White-Lewis, 2020) and color-evasive racism (Lara, 2019; Liera & Hernandez, 2021).

Racial equity requires explicit attention to structural racism and institutionalized racism, and demands transforming organizational practices, policies, and cultures to support equitable experiences and outcomes (Bensimon, 2018; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Posselt et al., 2020). Search committees must be trained to “read whiteness” in presidential hiring so that they can identify, interrogate, and disrupt institutionalized racism (e.g., white supremacy: Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; McNair et al., 2020; Liera, 2020b).

WHAT IS THIS TOOL?

This tool proposes four additional topics for search committee training, beyond compositional diversity and (general) implicit bias. We explain the rationale for each area and how each can advance racial equity in search committees' work.

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

Our recommendations are for human resources personnel, chief diversity officers, and others who are typically in charge of planning and delivering the training that search committees receive. Others interested in this tool include search committees since they will undergo the training, and executive search firms who staff the search committee.

RECOMMENDED TOPICS

TOPIC 1: ESTABLISHING KEY DEFINITIONS AND CREATING A SPACE FOR SENSEMAKING

Resources for starting points to define key terms.

- The Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California's [Core Concepts of Racial Equity handout](#).
- Terminology on page 54 of this report.

How does this topic help search committees center racial equity in presidential search?

Defining terms establishes an explicit foundation upon which a search committee's work can be based. When these terms are not defined, they can be decoupled from race and absolve committee members from addressing institutionalized racism in racial structures like presidential hiring (Gonzales et al., 2021; Liera, 2020b, 2022). An example from a DEI training in STEM is instructive (Gonzales et al., 2021). Facilitators did not define diversity, equity, and inclusion. Not only was discussion of institutionalized racism in STEM left off the table during the training, but facilitators also did not address how *everyone* has diverse identities, thereby discounting the racial inequities that racially minoritized people in STEM face.

Equally important to establishing particular definitions is for search committee members to make sense of what they are presented with. This can facilitate learning, and also buy-in for what racial equity in presidential search requires of them.

TOPIC 2: IDENTIFYING AND MITIGATING BIASES IN PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH

DEI training should require search committee members to break down the search process into stages (e.g., search committee formation, job ad and recruitment, evaluation rubric, interview questions, campus forums) and provide search committee members with examples of how biases operate in each stage (see Table 3 for examples). In addition to mapping the search process into different stages, training should provide strategies to mitigate biases throughout the search process (Table 4).

How does this topic help search committees center racial equity in presidential search?

In general, people tend to use shortcuts and heuristics to make decisions (Kahneman, 2011). Although such shortcuts can make everyday decision-making easier, they become problematic when evaluators (e.g., search committee members, chancellor, board of trustee members) rely on heuristics to make high-stakes decisions (Danowitz Sagaria, 2002; Posselt, 2016; White-Lewis, 2020). Biases operate below consciousness and strike when people like search committee members have access to limited information, are under time pressure, and must juggle multiple commitments (Staats et al., 2015). Slowing down the process by identifying *what* biases are operating and *how* they are operating in the evaluative context is critical (O'Meara et al., 2020).

In a presidential search process, this means search committees should take the time to think about the search process in different, interrelated ways, and discuss *what* and *how* biases operate throughout the search process.

TABLE 3. EXAMPLES OF BIASES

Composition of Committee	Job Description and Recruitment	Interviews and Decision-Making
Lacking diverse perspectives and identities leads to homophily.	Relying on existing networks that include people with similar social and professional backgrounds.	Holding Candidates of Color to higher standards and expectations than white candidates or underestimating their experience.

TABLE 4. EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES

Composition of Committee	Job Description and Recruitment	Interviews and Decision-Making
Compose a search committee with diverse members who have experience with racial equity and are not reluctant to challenge traditions.	Understand that potential presidential Candidates of Color may not have access to the networks of search firms and committee members.	Before the search commences, document potential biases that search committee members may have for and against presidential candidates. Use well-defined, structured rubrics to evaluate everyone with the same criteria.

TOPIC 3: RECONCEPTUALIZING “MERIT” AND “FIT”

Given the centrality of merit and fit criteria in determining who is “qualified” to be a college president, training should use racial equity as a framework to reconceptualize merit and fit (see Liera & Ching, 2020, for a thorough description). Use the following list of questions for search committees to consider their understanding of merit and fit before commencing the search process (adapted from Liera & Ching, 2020). This activity has two steps. First, each search committee member should individually complete the following sentences:

- When considering a candidate’s “merit” for this position, I think about these qualities ...
- When considering a candidate’s “fit” for this position, I think about these qualities ...

Second, the search committee should group together the responses for merit and the responses for fit and discuss what search committee members have shared. Then, as a group, discuss the following questions to structure the conversation:

- What do our responses suggest about the criteria for merit/fit associated with this position?
- In what ways do these criteria for merit/fit align with traditional or equity-minded conceptions (see *What is Equity-Minded Leadership*, page 6)?
- Based on these criteria for merit/fit, who will likely surface as strong candidates for the position?
- How would these criteria for merit/fit impact candidates from racially minoritized groups?

Based on the discussions, participants in the exercise can construct merit and fit criteria for the position that incorporate the equity-minded conceptions described above; search committee members should agree to use these criteria in their evaluation of candidates.

How does this topic help search committees center racial equity in presidential search?

In many evaluation contexts, including search committees, biases operate through the concepts of merit and fit (Liera & Ching, 2020; Posselt et al., 2020; White-Lewis, 2020). Like many evaluative metrics, merit and fit are subjective because search committee members' training, experiences, and identities inform how they conceptualize and apply such metrics (Posselt, 2016, White-Lewis, 2020). In evaluative contexts, "merit" refers to the knowledge, skills, and experiences committees use to assess candidates' worthiness for the job (Liera & Ching, 2020; Posselt et al., 2020). "Fit" refers to particular standards, norms, and taken-for-granted notions of who is deemed worthy and suitable for a role (Liera & Ching, 2020, White-Lewis, 2020).

In presidential searches, traditional conceptions of merit often reflect academic pathways (e.g., tenure-stream positions) and administrative positions overseeing academic affairs (e.g., dean, provost). Without considering stratification in opportunities to access such coveted experiential positions, search committees miss opportunities to identify presidential candidates who bring diverse experiences that have provided them with similar leadership skills that could be more suited for racial equity in the 21st century. Search committees often use "fit" to assess presidential candidates' likability, including whether they match the culture of the university (e.g., dominant norms, values, perspectives, leisure pursuits, and self-presentation styles). However, traditional conceptions of merit and fit value Eurocentric epistemologies in ways that reproduce racial inequities (Liera & Ching, 2020).

A reconceptualized approach to merit and fit focuses on valuing presidential candidates who have experience with race and equity work throughout the various job criteria.

TOPIC 4: CREATING EVALUATION TOOLS THAT CENTER RACIAL EQUITY

Teach search committee members how to evaluate applications and candidates for presidential positions. Instead of assuming that search committee members know how to design and implement evaluation tools (e.g., criteria, interview questions), time should be provided for the search committee to discuss what it means to evaluate and hire a president. Using racial equity as a framework, such training should instruct search committee members on how to create and use holistic criteria that focus on experiences, skills, and knowledge that will meet the needs of their organization.

How does this topic help search committees center racial equity in presidential search?

Search committee members often rely on their idiosyncratic preferences when evaluating applications and candidates (White-Lewis, 2020), so having opportunities to develop shared language about how to design and implement evaluative tools to assess presidential candidates and their application materials could mitigate individual biases.

Evaluation and Accountability: Ensuring Racial Equity in Search Committee Work

WHY FOCUS ON SEARCH COMMITTEE WORK?

The work of the search committee is critical to deciding which candidates are selected for interviews and subsequently move forward (see Appendix: CCC superintendent president map, p. 61; CCC multi-college district map, p. 67, CSU map, p. 76; UC map, p. 83).

Search committees do their work behind closed doors. A key reason for this is to help ensure the confidentiality of candidates in the process. That said, secrecy has a way of perpetuating racial bias and racism (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 5); thus, striking a balance between confidentiality and accountability for racial equity in presidential hiring is critical.

Additionally, given that search committees tend to be composed based on stakeholder representation, the fact is that some members (e.g., faculty) traditionally hold more power in the institution than others (e.g., staff). This means that attending to power asymmetries in evaluation, deliberation, and decision-making among a diverse group of committee members is especially important.

WHAT IS THIS TOOL?

This tool includes seven recommendations for centralizing accountability and transparency in presidential search, specifically as it relates to evaluation, deliberation, and decision-making. Each recommendation comes with an explanation of how it advances racial equity.

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

Our recommendations are for search committees who are tasked with recruiting candidates, reviewing candidate materials, interviewing candidates, and recommending finalists for board consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: ESTABLISH GROUND RULES AND THE DIVISION OF LABOR

Search committees should first establish agreed-upon ground rules. The ground rules provide an opportunity for the search committee to create norms about how to review presidential candidates. In creating the ground rules, consider the following components:

- Listen without judgment.
- Be honest about holding one's self and each other accountable.
- Acknowledge power differences among committee members.
- Focus on strengths for each presidential candidate.
- Acknowledge that each member of the committee is guided by a unique perspective based on their professional role, experiences, and other identities such as gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation, among many.

Recognizing the potential power dynamics, search committee training should provide opportunities for members to collectively discuss the division of labor, including the role of equity advocates, and equally distribute the responsibilities of racial equity among all members. Just because someone is designated an equity advocate does not mean that the rest of the committee is relieved from being equity-minded.

How does this make the search committee's work racially equitable?

Given that power operates differently in various contexts, training should outline the responsibilities of the search committee members within the entire presidential search and appointment process. Search committees are responsible for writing and disseminating the job ad, designing and implementing interview questions, and creating evaluation rubrics, which often are informed by their understanding of merit and fit (Liera & Ching, 2020). For these reasons, if search committees are working with a search firm or consulting agency, the vendor's role is to support the search committee in meeting its goals. External consultants are not the "search chairs"—they

create the structures and logistics to conduct a presidential search that is effective, efficient, fair, ethical, and vigilant about racial equity.

RECOMMENDATION 2: CREATE AND USE EVALUATION RUBRICS

Invest time in designing rubrics that are comprehensive, contextualized, systematic, and equity-minded. Use the rubrics to review cover letters and resumes/curriculum vitae, and to select semi-finalists and finalists. The rubrics should reflect the mission and values of the organization and facilitate equity-minded evaluations and deliberations. The goal is to use an equity-minded lens in designing and using holistic rubrics that consist of the following components:

- A **comprehensive** rubric has numerous and diverse criteria that assess the whole person. The criteria should prioritize racial equity and be clear that the desirable candidate has a track record addressing racialized structures, policies, and practices.
- A **contextualized** rubric looks beyond the numbers and considers opportunities such as access to professional experiences that signal readiness for presidential positions. For example, when reviewing resumes/curricula vitae, think about the professional experiences within the context of who typically has access to such coveted positions. And ask yourself, in what ways does the candidate meet such criteria through different (or non-traditional) professional pathways/trajectories?
- A **systematic** rubric means that reviews are based on shared, predefined criteria, with structured protocol on how to use the rubric for all presidential candidates. Just because the rubric is structured does not mean that search committee members cannot discuss discrepancies in evaluations. On the contrary, a systematic rubric calls on a search committee to create space to discuss criteria, including testing the rubric and addressing issues with underdefined and underdeveloped criteria and metrics.

- An **equity-minded** rubric means that search committee members pay attention to institutionalized racism, including how biases operate in evaluations of presidential Candidates of Color, and search committee members take it upon themselves to mitigate such biases in evaluations. With this in mind, in applying the rubric the search committee should implement equity checkpoints to hold itself accountable for centralizing equity and mitigating biases.

Begin by identifying the criteria, then identify and define the dimensions of hiring. Instead of relying on numeric rating scales without defined properties, the rubric needs to have dimensions that are broad enough to allow candidates to fulfill them, and for search committee members to have their interpretation. That said, dimensions should be narrow enough to guide search committee review. The rubric should have diverse criteria with high, medium, and low gradations for each criterion, as well as include space for comments to justify assessments or to share thoughts and reflections. Below is an example of an equity-minded holistic rubric.

TABLE 5. EXAMPLE OF RUBRIC

	Low	Medium	High
UNDERSTANDS HOW INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM MANIFESTS	Speaks about equity generally and rarely mentions race. Tends to refer to the campus community in race-neutral ways.	Mentions racial equity as a priority and the importance of diversity, but does not question how race-neutral practices block racial diversity.	Elaborates on how measures of excellence in faculty hiring, admissions, fields of study, etc., are a barrier to racial diversity.
HAS A TRACK RECORD OF ADDRESSING CAMPUS RACIAL CLIMATE IN SUBSTANTIVE WAYS	Is not aware of any racist incidents and typically would delegate the matters to the office; e.g., campus security.	Mentions having had to deal with racist graffiti and messages. Wrote a letter to the campus community indicating that it was not acceptable and mandated three hours of professional development on microaggressions.	Describes in detail how a fraternity's blackface Halloween party brought about specific changes in professional development, suspension of the fraternity, a public apology to Black students and the allocation of special funds to the Black Student Union as a form of reparation for having experienced racism.
EXPERIENCE IN USING DATA TO IMPROVE INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE VIS-À-VIS RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS	Mentions the importance of data to close achievement gaps and develop programs to bring Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students up to the level of white and Asian students.	Describes their leadership as evidence-based and emphasizes the use of predictive analytics to reduce achievement gaps.	Shares a data report that included questions such as: How do our Honors Program policies result in the underrepresentation of Black and Latinx students?

Rubric adopted from Equity in Graduate Education Center's [Strategies for Equity-Based Holistic Review Workshop](#).

How does this make the search committee's work racially equitable?

Rubrics help establish a standard baseline upon which search committee members evaluate candidates. When a rubric is comprehensive, contextualized, systematic, and equity-minded, it helps create a transparent foundation for racially equitable evaluation of candidate merit and fit.

Rubrics can also indicate what to listen for and whether the candidates' discursive practices reflect race evasiveness, race neutrality, or race consciousness.

RECOMMENDATION 3: EXPAND QUALIFIED LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS AND CENTER EQUITY-MINDEDNESS IN CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS

Give serious consideration to candidates who do not come through the traditional academic trajectory. Non-academic leadership pathways provide opportunities for people to develop the necessary leadership skills (e.g., oversight of budgets, working with diverse stakeholders) to be effective presidents. Moreover, non-academic leadership pathways also provide experience with racial equity and justice in ways that academic pathways may not.

Use an equity-minded lens to identify criteria that can increase the likelihood of identifying and hiring a president who will exercise leadership in critically race-conscious ways. Below is a juxtaposition of traditional and equity-minded approaches to evaluating candidates' credentials and experiences.

TABLE 6. EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL AND EQUITY-MINDED APPROACHES

Criteria	Traditional Approach	Equity-Minded Approach
Professional Pathways	Academic leadership pathways (e.g., faculty, department chair, dean, provost).	Equal consideration given for non-academic leadership pathways (e.g., vice president of student services, director of opportunity programs; nonprofit sectors).
Leadership Experience	Number of years in senior leadership positions.	Experience creating, organizing, and/or leading programs that advance racial equity and anti-racism; track record with hiring practitioners who are critically race conscious and equity-minded.
Fiscal Management	Experience managing budgets.	Experience raising money and/or budgeting for initiatives that advance racial equity.
Professional Development	Not central/not prioritized; participated in traditional leadership programs.	Participated in leadership programs focused on developing Leaders of Color, as well as seminars, workshops and initiatives that develop their knowledge and capacity to be critically race-conscious leaders and to create anti-racist and racial-equity opportunities for the institution.

How does this make the search committee's work racially equitable?

Our analysis of presidential job announcements (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 7) as well as president interviews (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 2) revealed that search committees place a high value on presidential candidates with traditional academic pathways. Historically, racially minoritized presidential candidates have not had the networks and opportunities to access academic leadership positions. Non-academic tracks have been more open; thus, considering candidates from this trajectory could result in a more racially diverse pool.

Candidates of Color, particularly those who are aware of the burden of whiteness in academia (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 3) could be more poised to practice equity-minded leadership. Search committees that prioritize equity-minded leadership qualifications are better positioned to see how Candidates of Color can advance racial equity on their campus.

RECOMMENDATION 4: DEVELOP MULTIPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO ASSESS COMPETENCY FOR RACIAL EQUITY LEADERSHIP

Design interview questions to assess whether presidential candidates have a deep understanding of racial equity and justice in the various areas that they will be responsible for. Below are common categories with examples of interview questions framed with an equity-minded lens. Keep in mind that the word “equity” does not always have to be in the interview question. As a search committee member, it is your job to assess whether and how the responses to the questions reflect a leader who has experience (that the committee decides to include) in the various criteria to be an effective leader, and also understands racial equity issues. Keep in mind that we provide example questions that search committees may select to use. We are not suggesting search committees use all of these questions. As a committee, decide which ones need to be included for the search, which ones do not, and why.

TABLE 7. EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS THAT INTEGRATE RACIAL EQUITY

Category	Interview Question
Introduction	California prides itself as a leader of equity in higher education. How have experiences prepared you to advance the state's values for equity as president of [name of organization]? (Listen for how racial equity is addressed in the response.)
Future Activities as President	Based on what you know about [name of organization], what would you prioritize during your first year as president? Why? And how does that priority advance racial equity and justice?
Resource Development/Fiscal Management	Please give an example of how you have raised funds or budgeted funds to support initiatives that advance racial equity. What criteria do you use to make decisions about resource/funds distribution?
Advocacy/External Relations/Public Relations	Please describe your experience in advocating for racial equity, and how you addressed conflict and resistance.
Communication	Give us examples of how you have used different styles or methods of communication with various internal constituent groups, and which styles or methods have worked best for you. Are there specific approaches that have worked for you when communicating with internal constituent groups about racial equity?

Category	Interview Question
Internal Leadership/ Management/ Governing Boards	As our student body, college constituencies, and communities are culturally diverse, how would you equitably manage or balance the demands of all these various groups? How will you ensure that racial equity is an authentic responsibility for each group? How will you address constituents who see racial equity efforts as an attack on white people and/or the “traditions” of the institution?
Faculty Leadership/ Relations	How have you addressed racial equity in faculty hiring? How has the faculty diversified under your leadership? What strategies would you employ to enhance the racial diversity of our faculty and the hiring of faculty who have a track records supporting Students of Color?
Shared Governance and Staff Relations	Please describe a situation that you felt demonstrated equitable employee participation in decision-making. What type of strategies have you implemented to ensure a more racially equitable process in decision-making?
Students/Student Success/Enrollment Management	What is your experience with ensuring that support structures are equitably serving students from diverse backgrounds, specifically Students of Color? Please give us an example.
Technology	How have you personally been involved in developing your institution’s technology infrastructure and in bringing computing resources to faculty and students being negatively impacted by the digital racial divide?
Diversity/Equity/ Inclusion/Social Justice	What does racial equity/justice mean to you? How do you envision upholding your values for racial equity/justice?
Team-Building	How would you ensure that Students and Employees of Color have equitable access for input into decision-making? How would you ensure that your leadership team has the capacity and experience to do their work in a critically race-conscious and equity-minded way? How will you ensure that they treat racial equity and anti-racism as legitimate priorities?
Strategic Planning	What pressing issues of racial equity do you see on campus? In what ways do you foresee using and/or creating the strategic plan to address issues of racial inequity on campus? What will you do to build a campus culture where whiteness is decentered and racial equity is centered?
Ethics	Please share with us an instance when your own ethical sensibilities conflicted with how you were expected to function in your professional role and, if you could, please tell us how you resolved the conflict. In what ways have you made racial equity a part of your ethical practice?
Crisis Management	Share a situation where you were responsible for leading the response during a racial crisis. What steps did you take, and how was the racial crisis addressed as a result of your leadership? How were key constituents a part of the process?

SITUATIONAL CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

In addition to the questions in Table 7, search committees should consider creating short case scenarios for candidates to respond to. These “situational case study” questions would allow the search committee to craft “real life” racial equity scenarios and see how candidates would respond.

SCENARIO 1: DIVERSIFYING THE FACULTY

The campus has 30 new faculty positions spread across the humanities, social science, teacher education, and STEM. Data for the institution shows that 80% of the current faculty are white. Moreover, there are no Black STEM faculty, and overall retention rates for Faculty of Color are very low. As president, how would you take advantage of the 30 new faculty positions to increase racial diversity? What steps would you take to address low retention of Faculty of Color?

SCENARIO 2: CAMPUS CLIMATE

Results from the National Campus Climate Survey show that 30% of Black students and 40% of Latinx students feel like they do not belong and perceive hostility toward them from their white peers. What else would you want to know to understand why Black and Latinx students experience the campus differently from white students? Who would you turn to for more information and advice?

SCENARIO 3: FUNDING

Your campus has just received a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to implement a program to improve STEM teaching and learning in Hispanic Serving Institutions. In the past we have observed that grants that are specifically for Hispanic Serving Institutions are not implemented in ways that focus specifically on Latinx students. How would you go about ensuring that the funds are invested to benefit Latinx students and Latinx faculty? What kinds of resistance do you anticipate, and how would you deal with it?

How does this make the search committee's work racially equitable?

Given the complexity of a president's job, racial equity and diversity could be compartmentalized, and during the interview process this shows up as search committees asking “the” single and perfunctory diversity question. This limits the search committee's ability to identify and hire a president with a commitment to and experience being equity-minded in various professional responsibilities.

Compartmentalizing diversity (and equity) to one question and to a limited set of criteria makes it easier for candidates to provide stock answers that do little but scratch the surface and show they can “talk the talk” of racial equity. It leaves unclear whether they can actually “walk the walk.” In today's climate, diversity, equity,

and inclusion could operate as a commodity in the job market. Infusing racial equity across interview questions should provide search committees with ample evidence of whether and how candidates are walking the walk.

RECOMMENDATION 5: CONSIDER WHAT IS ESSENTIAL TO GATHER DURING SEMI-FINALIST INTERVIEWS

Before the semi-finalist interviews, decide as a committee what you need to know in order to determine whether candidates have the skills and experiences to be a leader for your campus and, more specifically, a critically race-conscious, equity-minded leader. What must you ask and get answers to? Given the relatively short length of semi-finalist interviews, it is unlikely that candidates will be able to provide in-depth and genuine responses to all questions. In effect,

the shortness of the interview creates unrealistic expectations for what a candidate can share. Committees are then evaluating candidates based on how well they present, which turns on racialized and gendered biases (see Recommendation 6).

How does this make the search committee's work racially equitable?

Being more judicious about what needs to be known about a candidate before advancing them to the next stage provides more time for candidates to speak to essential matters. Particularly when racial equity in leadership is prioritized, this gives candidates ample opportunity to address how they would be a critically race-conscious, equity-minded leader.

RECOMMENDATION 6: CHECK YOUR RACIALIZED AND GENDERED ASSUMPTIONS OF HOW CANDIDATES PRESENT AND ACT

Especially during interactions with candidates and candidate deliberations, search committee members should hold each other accountable, via the ground rules, when they have raced and gendered responses to presidential candidates. When this happens, the search process should have space for committee members to stop and ask themselves, “Why am I responding this way to this presidential candidate?” Members should share reactions and responses, including how it may impact individual assessments.

How does this make the search committee's work racially equitable?

Who and what a president should look and sound like is normed to white men (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 1), which leaves little room for Candidates of Color to present their authentic selves (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 3). It is unsurprising, then, that search committee members have racialized and gendered expectations of how presidential candidates should physically present themselves, speak, interact with committee members, and answer interview questions. These expectations result in racialized and gendered judgments (Posselt et al., 2020) that, in turn, lead to racialized and gendered outcomes in hiring processes. Establishing the expectation that such racialized and gendered assumptions and judgments will be checked helps ensure that when they emerge, they will be addressed.

RECOMMENDATION 7: ESTABLISH EQUITY CHECKPOINTS

In addition to implementing Recommendation 6, search committees should create and implement equity checkpoints for each stage of the search process, to hold each other accountable for mitigating biases and integrating racial equity. All committee members should sign off on each stage of the search. This sign-off should be anonymous.

How does this make the search committee's work racially equitable?

Equity checkpoints help ensure that evaluation criteria and processes, as well as decision outcomes, are aligned.

Checkpoints should ensure that each stage of the hiring process prioritizes racial equity—from the development of the job ad to the treatment of committee members and candidates to the selection of a president who embodies an organization's values for racial equity and justice.

Asking all committee members to sign off at each stage helps check biases from entering the process through race-evasive mechanisms.

Making the checkpoint sign-offs anonymous could address power, imbalances created by positional power and possibly alleviate some of the pressure that those in positions with less organizational power encounter on search committees.

The Right Institutional Calling Card: Using the Presidential Job Announcement Tool

WHY FOCUS ON PRESIDENTIAL JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS?

Presidential job announcements are a critical part of presidential searches (see Appendix: CCC superintendent president map, p. 61; CCC multi-college district map, p. 66, CSU map, p. 75; UC map, p. 82).

A job announcement serves the dual purpose of (a) signaling to candidates about institutional priorities and goals, thereby helping them understand if the organization is a place where they want to work; and (b) setting the stage for the search committee to evaluate candidates based on their qualifications (Bettinger, 2020; Liera, 2020b; Liera & Ching, 2020; Oikelome, 2017; Tuitt et al., 2007).

A well-written presidential job announcement can therefore attract more racially minoritized candidates into the pool and help to advance candidates who have experience in enhancing racial equity and/or equity-minded competencies (Center for Urban Education, 2017; Liera, 2020b; Smith et al., 2004). However, presidential job announcements typically fall short on signaling racial equity as an authentic institutional priority, and equity-mindedness and critical race consciousness as essential qualifications (*Whiteness Rules*, Finding 7).

WHAT IS THIS TOOL?

The purpose of the presidential job announcement tool is to guide the critical assessment of job announcements for their integration of racial equity and equity-mindedness. This tool was developed based on an empirical analysis of presidential job announcements and leadership profiles used in past presidential job searches, as well as an extensive review of the literature on racial equity, equity-mindedness, management, hiring, and the strategies that can be used to attract and advance racially minoritized candidates into the applicant pool. The tool includes four assessment dimensions: institutional context, engaging equity, using equity-minded language, and leadership pathways and qualifications.

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

The search committee and the executive search firm play the biggest roles in presidential job announcement creation, and thus they are the primary audience for this tool. Human resources personnel who support the presidential search process, campus constituents who attend listening sessions where feedback on the candidate profile and job announcement are sought, and boards could also be interested. Additionally, the basic tenets of the tool can be applied to the hiring of other high-level administrators or faculty members.

See the Appendix in Whiteness Rules: Racial Exclusion in Becoming an American College President for complete methodology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The tool can be used in at least two ways.

Diagnostic: Applied to previously published announcements to assess limitations and generate insights about improving the practice in the future.

Audit: Applied to ensure that racial equity and equity-minded concepts are embedded before the announcement is widely disseminated.

Tool users should first:

1. Review the rubric table for each dimension. The rubric table provides guidance for how to examine presidential job announcements for “low” (level 1), “average” (level 2), and “above average” (level 3) racial equity in each dimension (Tables 8-11).
2. Read each assessment question and associated examples. Each example includes text from actual job announcements. The dimension examples are terms and passages that range from level 1 to level 3 racial equity. If the example provided is not a level 3, a rationale is provided, and suggestions made for how it could be stronger from a racial equity perspective. When the example is level 3, a rationale is provided as to how it meets the level 3 criteria.
3. Scan the presidential announcement, mark if the recommended practice appears, and if it does, note where it appears.

After applying the tool:

4. Use the rubrics and examples to develop race-conscious announcements.

Note: We do not provide examples so that users can copy and paste them into their job announcements; rather, the inclusion of examples is intended to prompt practitioners to consider how language could be enhanced to accurately reflect institutional priorities, as well as initiatives and desired qualifications of presidential candidates, in a context-driven way.

DIMENSION 1: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

TABLE 8. EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL AND EQUITY-MINDED APPROACHES

Level 1: Low Racial Equity	Level 2: Average Racial Equity	Level 3: Above Average Racial Equity
<p>Institutional History:</p> <p>Failure to acknowledge and describe the institution’s historic legacy of exclusion.</p>	<p>Institutional History:</p> <p>Emergent recognition of the institution’s historic legacy of exclusion.</p>	<p>Institutional History:</p> <p>Comprehensive recognition of the institution’s historic legacy of exclusion.</p>
<p>Student Demographics:</p> <p>No or limited description of student racial demographics.</p>	<p>Student Demographics:</p> <p>Disaggregated breakdowns of student racial demographics.</p>	<p>Student Demographics:</p> <p>Disaggregated breakdowns of student, faculty, administrators, and staff racial demographics.</p>
<p>Academic Programs:</p> <p>Primary focus on “usual suspect” academic programs (e.g., Puente, Ethnic Studies Programs).</p>	<p>Academic Programs:</p> <p>Expanded focus on multiple academic programs.</p>	<p>Academic Programs:</p> <p>Expanded focus on multiple academic programs and progress toward racial equity.</p>
<p>Mission & Servingness²:</p> <p>Mentioning mission serving status without “servingness”.</p>	<p>Mission & Servingness:</p> <p>Moving toward servingness through actions and outcomes.</p>	<p>Mission & Servingness:</p> <p>Fully integrating servingness across the announcement.</p>

Garcia et al. (2019) developed the term “servingness” for Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Servingness refers to the extent to which an HSI is Hispanic-serving in their practices, policies, and organizational routines. We borrow this notion of servingness and apply it to racial equity organizational routines (Garcia et al., 2019).

1.

Does the announcement critically engage the institution's history and articulate current and/or anticipated actions the university is going to take to actualize equity?

LEVEL 2 EXAMPLE:

"[Institution Name] opened in [1938] with an all-male enrollment of 110 students... In a first for the all-male campus, 329 women joined the student body in 1961.

WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS EXAMPLE LEVEL 3?

Though this example is related to gender and not race, it is an example of how to call attention to historical exclusionary practices. To qualify as a level 3 example, the statement would need to describe the exclusion of Students of Color and their current status. This is important because historic exclusion of Students of Color and women creates durable inequities over time within organizations, and those vestiges manifest as physical reminders (e.g., campus monuments) and workplace norms codified through policy. An even stronger recognition in a job announcement would be to review the institution's history and detail explicit steps that the university has taken, or plans to take, to redress historic barriers, in terms of gender in this case, or specifically in terms of race.

2.

Does the announcement provide a longitudinal breakdown of student demographics as they relates to race and other identity characteristics? If current statistics reveal low racial/ethnic diversity, does the announcement describe the institution’s current approach to improvement?

LEVEL 2 EXAMPLE:

Campuswide	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016
American Indian/ Alaska Native	44	39	28	18	16
Asian	1,434	1,484	1,474	1,462	1,511
Black/ African American	2,481	2,385	2,107	1,958	1,920
Hispanic/ Latino	6,528	7,334	7,862	8,137	8,442
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pac Isl	60	54	46	42	43
White	1,820	1,730	1,558	1,465	1,303
Two or more races	419	426	414	413	413
Subtotal	12,786	13,452	13,489	13,495	13,648
Unknown	911	864	757	647	519
Nonresident Alien	236	354	441	493	564
Total	13,933	14,670	14,687	14,635	14,731

Several announcements provided breakdowns of student racial demographics. This institution went a step further by providing longitudinal trends that highlight where progress has been made and where it has not.

WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS EXAMPLE LEVEL 3?

An even stronger example would be to contextualize student racial demographic data. We provide the following fictitious example of going beyond reporting demographics to using them to point to key areas of improvement necessary for the next university leader:

“As the student demographic data reveal, the university has experienced a rapid increase in the enrollment of Hispanic/Latinx students in the last 10 years. To serve this student population, our campus has developed a series of retention and completion initiatives, including the recently opened Latinx Student Center, the creation of a Latinx Student Success Director position in the Office of Undergraduate Studies, and the development of the Center for Latin American Studies, an interdisciplinary research collaboration between the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Social Sciences. A successful presidential candidate will be expected to build on these initiatives and have a demonstrated record of success in enhancing outcomes for Latinx students.

As the student demographic data reveal, the university has not significantly increased the representation of Black/African American, Pacific Islander, or Indigenous students. As a result, the president will be expected to be deeply involved in catalyzing organizational change efforts that enhance equity in the recruitment and retention of students from these racially minoritized groups.”

3.**What academic programs and centers are represented in the announcement?
Does it represent the diversity of the campus?****LEVEL 3 EXAMPLE:**

“Academic Excellence:

- 48% of [Institution Name] applicants to U.S. medical schools gain acceptance, exceeding the national average of 45%. 61% of students accepted to medical school were from groups traditionally underrepresented in the health professions.
- [Institution Name] established the nation’s first Chicano Studies department in 1968. Today, the university confers more bachelor’s degrees to Latinx students in all disciplines combined than any other California university.
- From 1975 to 1999, 184 African Americans with baccalaureate degrees from [Institution Name] earned Ph.Ds, making [Institution Name] the top undergraduate origin of African Americans with doctorates west of the Mississippi River.”

WHAT MAKES THIS EXAMPLE LEVEL 3?

This example highlights a wide range of academic disciplines, several of which are explicitly race-conscious and show inroads toward success for minoritized students. To strengthen the first excerpt, instead of using vague language such as “underrepresented,” the institution can be direct by listing the student groups that are “traditionally underrepresented.”

4.

Does the announcement highlight the institution’s mission and serving status? If yes, does the announcement describe current and/or anticipated initiatives that align with this status?

LEVEL 2 EXAMPLE:

“Since achieving the designation of Hispanic Serving Institution in 2009, [Institution Name] has been eligible for HSI funding and other supports, with almost \$37 million in grant awards received since 2010. The most recent award, announced by the U.S. Department of Education on September 15, 2021, is for Project AYUDAS (Articulating Your Undergraduate Degree & Academic Success in STEM), an HSI STEM grant funded for \$4,999,990 over five years, designed to strengthen the STEM student success pipeline and transform collegiate STEM pathways for retention and success. The economic and fiscal impacts of these grants benefit the economies of local communities, the region, and throughout the entire state, generating significant benefits in the form of increased employment, labor income and economic output.

In 2019, [Institution Name] was the first CSU campus and one of only nine institutions in the nation to receive the inaugural Seal of *Excelencia*, a prestigious, voluntary, and comprehensive certification granted by the Washington, D.C.-based organization, *Excelencia* in Education. The Seal recognizes an institution’s very high level of commitment and effort to serve Latinx students successfully—to close equity gaps, accelerate the number of Latinx students who earn college degrees by 2030, and safeguard America’s future by promoting more high-quality educational opportunities for all of the nation’s students.”

WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS EXAMPLE LEVEL 3?

This excerpt shows that the institution is an HSI and highlights how the institution has leveraged that status to fund programs to benefit minoritized undergraduate students, and also shows other positive outcomes. To advance equity even further, the announcement should specifically mention how the grants have impacted racially minoritized students.

DIMENSION 2: ENGAGING EQUITY

TABLE 9. ENGAGING EQUITY RUBRIC FOR RACIAL EQUITY

Level 1: Low Racial Equity	Level 2: Average Racial Equity	Level 3: Above Average Racial Equity
Engaging Equity: Siloing diversity, equity, and inclusion.	Engaging Equity: Multiple areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion.	Engaging Equity: Multiple meaningful areas of actions and outcomes related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
Scope of Equity: Focus on students only.	Scope of Equity: Focus on students, faculty, and staff.	Scope of Equity: Focus on students, faculty, and staff that advances equity-minded actions and outcomes.

5.**Are racial equity and equity-mindedness addressed throughout the announcement?****LEVEL 3 EXAMPLE:**

Equity and Inclusion

- “Lead the college in an all-inclusive, institution-wide dialogue on creating a culture of equity, inclusion, and racial and social justice district-wide.”
- “Create a framework to take action that would support rooting out racism and inequity by developing policies and practices to address intended and unintended racial inequities that exist.”

WHAT MAKES THIS EXAMPLE LEVEL 3?

These passages stand out because they use strong, explicit equity-minded language (e.g., “racism” instead of “achievement gap,” equity-minded, acknowledging how racism permeates institutional policies and practices, and separating “equity and inclusion” from “diversity”).

6.

If and when the announcement discusses equity, is it primarily in the context of students? Are current and/or anticipated equity efforts discussed in relation to faculty and staff?

LEVEL 3 EXAMPLE:

“Simply bringing more diversity to campus is not enough. Infrastructure must be maintained or created and culture tended to, in order to ensure that racial diversity is not just a number but a lived experience, and that Students, Staff, and Faculty of Color are not just recruited but engaged and retained. The President will continue efforts to diversify the faculty, staff, and student body, implementing initiatives and programs, among other interventions, that make [Institution Name] a place where people of all backgrounds can survive and be positioned to thrive academically, professionally, and personally.”

WHAT MAKES THIS EXAMPLE LEVEL 3?

This example stands out because it not only refers to broader campus constituency groups (e.g., faculty, staff, administrators), but also refers to how their inclusion should be more than symbolic and include efforts to ensure racially minoritized groups thrive.

DIMENSION 3: USING EQUITY-MINDED LANGUAGE

TABLE 10. EQUITY-MINDED LANGUAGE RUBRIC FOR RACIAL EQUITY

Level 1: Low Racial Equity	Level 2: Average Racial Equity	Level 3: Above Average Racial Equity
<p>Race Avoidance:</p> <p>Race is not mentioned when making reference to diversity, equity, and inclusion.</p>	<p>Race Mentioned Only in Tandem with Other Identities:</p> <p>Race and racial diversity, equity, and inclusion are only described when mentioning another aspect of identity (e.g., gender).</p>	<p>Naming Specific Racial Groups:</p> <p>Specific racial groups (e.g., Black/African American, Latinx) are identified.</p>
<p>Deficit Language:</p> <p>Students from racially minoritized backgrounds are described based on differences in outcomes, rather than by differences in opportunities.</p>	<p>Generic Equity Commitment:</p> <p>Equity is mentioned but not explained in reference to specific racial equity gaps and/or initiatives to ameliorate gaps.</p>	<p>Racial equity is defined and emphasized:</p> <p>Racial equity is specifically mentioned and described as an important institutional goal and/or responsibility of the president.</p>
<p>Generic Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion:</p> <p>Diversity is described in the abstract and equity is not mentioned.</p>		

7.

Does the announcement use race-avoidant, deficit, or generic diversity language when describing institutional policy and practice? How, if at all, could equity-minded language be used to better reflect institutional policy and practice?

EXAMPLES OF RACE-AVOIDANT, DEFICIT, OR GENERIC DIVERSITY LANGUAGE (LEVEL 1):

Not mentioning race when describing diversity or equity concepts; using words such as “underrepresented,” “achievement gap,” “disadvantaged,” “at-risk,” or “non-traditional.”

WHAT MAKES THESE TERMS LEVEL 1?

Terms such as “underrepresented” and “achievement gap” place the onus on students, rather than the institution, for outcomes. They also obscure racial inequities by aggregating Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students with students from other historically marginalized groups, which fails to illuminate unique opportunities that tailor programs to their success.

8.

Does the announcement define racial equity, equity-mindedness, and/or anti-racism if these terms are used?

LEVEL 3 EXAMPLES OF EQUITY-MINDED LANGUAGE:

In one example the “desired qualifications” section states: “Recent experience working with African American, Latinx, Indigenous and other racially minoritized students in the classroom and an understanding of how historical patterns of exclusions of these groups in higher education shape patterns of participation and outcomes.”

In another announcement, the institution states that the new president will “create a framework to take action that would support rooting out racism and inequity by developing policies and practices to address intended and unintended racial inequities that exist.”

We saw ample evidence of equity-minded language, particularly in several community college announcements, such as creating a framework that would “support rooting our racism,” and a desired qualifications section that explicitly refers to distinct racial groups and identifies “historical patterns of exclusion.”

WHAT MAKES THESE EXAMPLES LEVEL 3?

In contrast to deficit and race-avoidant terms, equity-minded terms center how the institution, and the incoming president, are poised to address racialized patterns of participation and outcomes among students, faculty, and staff.

DIMENSION 4: LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS AND QUALIFICATIONS

TABLE 11. LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS AND QUALIFICATIONS RUBRIC FOR RACIAL EQUITY

Level 1: Low Racial Equity	Level 2: Average Racial Equity	Level 3: Above Average Racial Equity
<p>Experience with diversity and inclusion is not mentioned, or mentioned but not prioritized, in candidate qualifications:</p> <p>Qualifications mention diversity and/or inclusion but not racial equity.</p>	<p>Experience with equity is mentioned, but not specifically prioritized in candidate qualifications:</p> <p>Experience with enhancing equity is mentioned as a qualification but not specified or prioritized.</p>	<p>Specific equity-minded competencies are prioritized:</p> <p>Qualifications specifically mention the kinds of racial equity competencies candidates would be expected to demonstrate; these qualifications are required.</p>
<p>Narrow kinds of leadership skills and/or experiences are emphasized:</p> <p>Qualifications indicate that candidates with academic backgrounds and/or experience in specific types of contexts will be prioritized.</p>		<p>Array of academic and non-academic pathways are emphasized:</p> <p>Qualifications signal that candidates with different kinds of higher education experience will be advanced.</p>

9.

Does the announcement signal that a broad array of leadership experiences and qualifications will be considered?

LEVEL 1 EXAMPLE:

“Excellent academic credentials and record of scholarship or equivalent experience and accomplishments that command the respect of the university community.”

WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS EXAMPLE LEVEL 3?

This example shows a desire for a president with academic credentials and a publication record. While the statement does add “or equivalent experience,” the phrasing of the sentence suggests a preference for someone with academic/higher education experience. A level 3 statement would emphasize an array of pathways without prioritizing an academic pathway. The qualifications should signal to candidates who have different kinds of experience that they can also be advanced if they do not have an extensive publication record or a traditional career trajectory from faculty to chair to dean to provost.

10.

Does the announcement emphasize that candidates with experience in enhancing racial equity and/or who have equity-minded competencies will be prioritized?

LEVEL 3 EXAMPLE:

“[Name of college] is seeking a visionary leader who is empathetic, equity-minded, and committed to supporting anti-racist practices. The future President will be a visionary and strategic individual who will build upon a tradition of collaboration in pursuit of student success. The Search Committee, Chancellor, and Governing Board will evaluate potential candidates based on the following competencies and commitments:

- Leads with cultural and racial competence and is responsive in creating and sustaining a welcoming and safe environment that supports teaching and learning.
- Effectively uses data to identify equity gaps in student outcomes and then mobilizes the college to ensure the identified students have the appropriate resources to succeed.
- Facilitates an environment of social justice, racial equity, and meaningful inclusion for all students, employees, and the broader community.”

WHAT MAKES THIS EXAMPLE LEVEL 3?

This example prioritizes race-centered competencies in the new president's primary responsibilities. The statement could have been better aligned with Level 3 criteria if instead of focusing on equity gaps it would have focused more explicitly on institutional practices, policies, and knowledge that create equity gaps.

ADDITIONAL CRITICALLY RACE-CONSCIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

The tools cover key aspects of presidential search, but more can and should be done to advance racial/ethnic diversity in the college presidency and racial equity in the search process. We close the toolkit with a final set of critically race-conscious recommendations. For each recommendation, we outline action items to get systems, campuses, and/or search committees started, as well as questions that stakeholders should ask to hold themselves to accountable.

RECOMMENDATION 1: CRITICALLY RACE-CONSCIOUS OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

Hiring an equity-minded, critically race-conscious President of Color starts with the candidate pool.

a. Don't rely on the search firm. Make recruitment everyone's business.

Search firms tend to go to the same well of candidates, and may include Candidates of Color and white women in STEM in the pool simply to achieve "paper" diversity.

Action Items

- Ask the search firm for demographic data of the candidate pools, semi-finalists, and finalists of their past five to seven searches, and what they will do to ensure high racial/ethnic diversity at each stage of the search.
- To build the pool, the search chair should personally and individually reach out to campus (e.g., provost, deans, office and unit heads, academic department chairs) and governance leaders (e.g., student, staff, academic senates and councils), as well as to leaders at other institutions.
- Each search committee member should contribute names of potential candidates and be ready to explain how the candidate could be a good fit for the institution, especially in terms of racial equity.

Accountability Questions

- Who has the search chair reached out to? What has that outreach yielded?
- Has each search committee member had the opportunity to propose candidates?
- What percentage of the pool was developed by the search firm, versus non-search firm sources?
- What is the racial/ethnic composition of the pool, broken down by source?
- Has the search committee exhausted all avenues for developing a racially/ethnically diverse candidate pool?

b. Cast a Wide Net Centered on Race

Recruitment tends to focus on the same people using the same types of nets in the same types of environments. Search committees and search firms must actively search for Candidates of Color, not just in the typical white-dominated/validated spaces, but in spaces where Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and Pacific Islander people are more likely to be. This should be an ongoing process.

Action Items

- Review racial demographic data of sitting presidents, chief academic and student services officers, deans, and other positions from where potential candidates may be drawn. This data analysis should cover national and regional trends, as well as trends by institutional sector (e.g., research universities, community colleges, liberal arts colleges). Use data to help target race-focused recruitment and outreach.
- Seek out People of Color who have completed leadership fellowship programs such as:

American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Leadership Programs (<https://www.aascu.org/LeadershipDevelopment/>)

American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows Program (<https://www.acenet.edu/Programs-Services/Pages/Professional-Learning/ACE-Fellows-Program.aspx>)

Aspen Institute's Rising Presidents Fellowship (<https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/risingpresidents/>)

- Attend and seek potential candidates at race/ethnicity-focused conferences such as those organized by:

African American Male Education Network & Development (A2MEND) <https://a2mend.net/>

American Association of Blacks in Higher Education (AABHE) <https://www.blacksinhigher.org/>

American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE) <https://www.aahhe.org/>

American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) <http://www.aihec.org/>

Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE) <http://apahenational.org/>

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) <https://www.hacu.net>

National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE) <https://www.ncore.ou.edu/en/>

Excelencia in Education <https://www.edexcelencia.org>

California Latinx Organization for Community College Professionals (Colegas) <https://cccologas.org>

- Reach out to Leaders of Color in academia and elsewhere for their recommendations, and speak with those recommended.

Accountability Questions

- Is the “net” for this search different than the one used for previous searches that resulted in a white president? In what ways?
- What is the racial/ethnic composition of the candidate pool? How is the composition different than in previous searches?

RECOMMENDATION 2: CRITICALLY RACE-CONSCIOUS TRAINING FOR BOARDS OF TRUSTEES

Boards of trustees are the final decision-makers in the presidential search process, and can thus make or break racial equity in presidential hiring. Like search committees, boards—which continue to be majority white in composition—need to be trained for racial equity.

Action Items

- Provide racial/ethnic and gender diversity data on the college presidency, to raise board awareness of the persistent whiteness of the college presidency and to demonstrate that greater racial diversity is possible. Consider showing data on:
 - Current presidents, chief academic and student services officers, deans, and other positions from where potential candidates may be drawn, nationally and with disaggregation by region/state, institutional sector, and peer institutions.
 - Historical patterns of presidential hires at the campus, in the system (if applicable), and at peer institutions.
- Provide critically race-conscious and equity-minded training for boards of trustees so that key stakeholders understand the ways in which racial equity should inform all parts of the presidential selection process. Training should not only focus on the conceptual (e.g., what is bias, privilege, stereotyping, racism) but on the practical (e.g., how does bias, privilege, stereotyping, and racism manifest in presidential search, and what boards can do about it).
 - If developed internally, have external racial equity experts review the training materials to ensure accuracy and completeness.
- Have all trustees complete the training prior to or immediately after a search is announced, so that racial equity in presidential search is “top of mind.”
- Update trainings annually to ensure that foci and materials are current with best racial equity knowledge and practice in presidential search.

Accountability Questions

- Have all trustees completed the training?
- What do trustees now know about racial (in)equity in presidential search that they didn't know before?
- Can trustees articulate why racial equity matters in presidential search?

RECOMMENDATION 3: FOCUS ON SUCCESSION PLANNING NOW

Black, Latinx Asian, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous groups are not just marginalized in the presidency but in roles that are typically considered stepping-stones to the presidency. Multiple stakeholders at every college and university must contribute to diversifying who occupies the roles that lead to the presidency and who has opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills to become a college president.

Action Items

- Since the majority of college presidents still come through the ranks of the faculty, work to ensure more racially minoritized people become tenure-track faculty members, department chairs, deans, and provosts.
- Provide faculty, academic department chairs, office and unit heads, and staff with leadership and administrative training opportunities. Consider developing “grow your own” programs or supporting participation in off-campus leadership fellowship programs.

Accountability Questions

- What is the racial/ethnic and gender composition of faculty, department chairs, deans, and provosts? Does this composition reflect the racial/ethnic and gender composition of college students?
- Who participates in leadership and administrative training opportunities? Does the racial/ethnic and gender diversity in participation reflect the racial/ethnic and gender composition of college students?

RECOMMENDATION 4: RETENTION MATTERS

A search process that results in the hiring of a President of Color is merely the first step. Candidates of Color need to see that Presidents of Color are supported and can have successful

presidencies. They need to see possibility models in order to believe that they too will be supported to succeed in the role.

Action Items

- Review data on presidential terms and turnover by race/ethnicity and gender—nationally, regionally/state, at peer institutions, in the system, and/or for the campus.
- Support the president once selected so that the individual is successful and stays. Immediate support could take the form of providing new presidents with an executive coach who can help with transition into the job and getting to know and understand the campus (including the racial dynamics).

Accountability Questions

- How does the presidential term and turnover rate compare across race/ethnicity and gender?
- Is the campus and system doing enough to support Presidents of Color?

RECOMMENDATION 5: GET FEEDBACK FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Given that most presidential search processes are fully or partially closed searches, only those who are “in the room” know what happened, and especially whether racial equity was centered or circumvented and in what ways. Without getting feedback on the process, how will mistakes be rectified, good practices be captured, and subsequent search processes to be improved?

Action Items

- Have human resources conduct exit interviews with, or craft an anonymous survey to capture feedback from trustees, search committee members, candidates (across race/ethnicity and gender) who had interactions with the search firm, those who were interviewed, and others involved in the process.
- Use the feedback to determine what should be done with the next search, for example, whether the same search firm should be used and whether search committee training and board training were sufficient.

Accountability Questions

- What can, should, and will be done in response to the feedback?

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TERMINOLOGY

EQUITY-MINDEDNESS

Reflects an awareness of the sociohistorical context of exclusionary practices and racism in higher education, and the effect of power asymmetries on opportunities and outcomes for racially minoritized groups. Equity-mindedness is a way of understanding and addressing social inequities that challenges the rhetorical and enacted blame of inequities in access, opportunity, and outcomes on students' social, cultural, and educational backgrounds; rather, equity-mindedness frames racial inequity as a dysfunction of higher education's policies and practices (Bensimon, 2007).

PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS (PWIS)/ HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

Those institutions whose histories, policies, practices, and ideologies center whiteness. PWIs, by design, tend to marginalize the identities, perspectives, and practices of People of Color (Cain-Sanschagrin et al., 2022).

IMPLICIT BIAS

The ways in which social role expectations, norms, and stereotypes shape our perceptions of individuals from different social groups (e.g., by race, gender, class) in ways that are generally thought to be unfair and/or prejudicial (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013).

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

The term institutional racism was first coined in 1967 by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*. Carmichael and Hamilton wrote that while individual racism is often identifiable because of its overt nature, institutional racism is less perceptible because of its "less overt, far more subtle" nature. Institutionalized racism occurs when organizational procedures, policies, or processes have discriminatory impacts, even if the individual actors are unaware of such impacts or hold non-discriminatory personal beliefs (Chesler & Crowfoot, 1989).

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate negative perception based on identity, (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, religion) (Sue et al., 2007).

RACIAL EQUITY

From a critical understanding, racial equity is pursued by an agenda of corrective justice (McPherson, 2015) for the educational debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) owed to subjugated populations; anti-racism to dismantle racism in institutional structures, policies, and practices (Pollock, 2009); and decentering whiteness as a norm that "courses freely through every artery of higher education" (Bensimon, 2020, p. 7).

RACIALIZATION

(also referred to as structural racialization)-"connotes a process rather than a static event. It implies a process or set of processes that may or may not be animated by conscious forces...it is a set of processes that may generate disparities...without any racist actors. It is a web without a spider" (powell, 2013, p.3).

WHITE FRAGILITY

A state in which racial stress becomes intolerable for white people, triggering a range of defensive moves such as outward displays of anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (Cabrera et al., 2017).

WHITE SUPREMACY

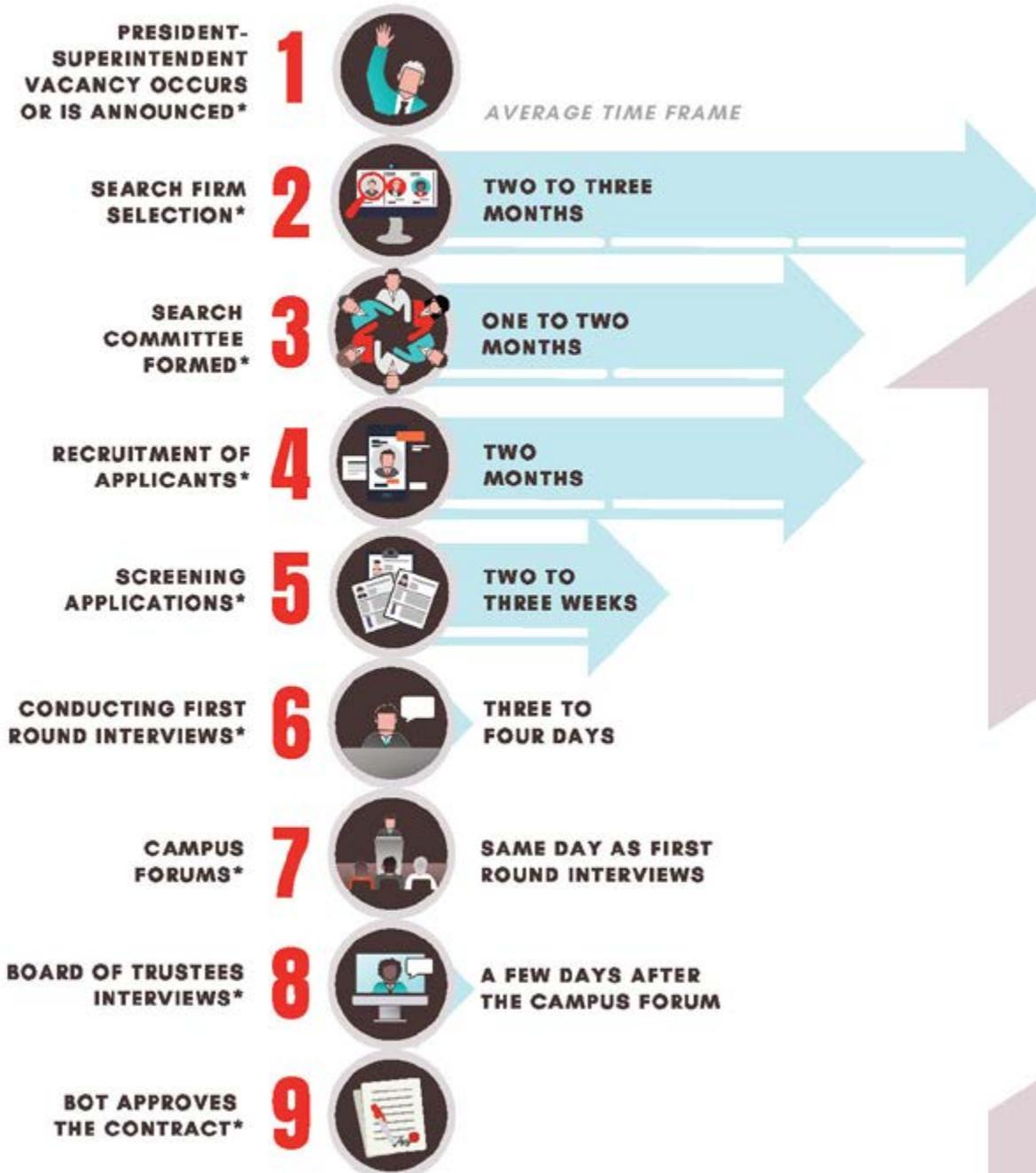
The political, economic, and cultural systems where whites control power and resources, where beliefs of white superiority are widespread, and white dominance as well as non-white subordination are enacted daily across institutions, organizations, and social structures (Harris, 1993; Southern, 2022).

WHITENESS

The ideologies, behaviors, and rhetoric that promote white superiority and dominance. More specifically, whiteness is a set of benefits and assumptions that accompany being white, that over time have been legitimated and upheld by the law. Whites rely on and expect these benefits. People of Color who enact white ideologies, behaviors, and rhetoric may be granted some of the benefits available to whites (Harris, 1993; Southern, 2022).

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE SUPERINTENDENT-PRESIDENT SEARCH PROCESS

A SINGLE COLLEGE DISTRICT EXAMPLE



LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

SUPERINTENDENT-PRESIDENT SEARCH PROCESS

WITH DETAILS



1 PRESIDENT-SUPERINTENDENT VACANCY OCCURS OR IS ANNOUNCED

- The Board of Trustees (BOT) establishes a search process to fill the vacancy (see [Policy on Superintendent-President Selection](#)).



2 SEARCH FIRM SELECTION

- BOT listens to presentations from different search firms to decide which one to hire.
 - BOT considers the search firms experience and track record with successful CEO searchers and whether they have experience working with California Community Colleges (given the uniqueness of CCC's shared governance and unions).
 - BOT also considers how well-prepared each search firm was in their presentation including the application of materials.
 - BOT also takes into account whether search firms have experience working with diverse candidates/applicants.
- The search firm assists the BOT with the hiring process including recruitment, job profile, interview process (campus forums), and the search process timeline.



3 SEARCH COMMITTEE FORMED

- BOT establishes a search committee that is representative of the various internal constituent groups, community members, and local partners.

Continuing on page 3.

- BOT identifies representatives for the search committee. A possible list of representatives could include the following:

Body	# of Representatives	Appointed by
Academic Senate	2	Academic Senate President
Full-time Faculty (LBCCFA)	1	LBCCFA President
Adjunct Faculty (CHI)	1	CHI President
Classified Employees (AFT)	1	AFT President
Classified Senate	1	Classified Senate President
Students	2	1 Representative shall be the Student Trustee and 1 Representative shall be appointed by the ASB President
Management Team	3	Board of Trustees (one of which will serve as the Chair of the Search Committee)
Confidential Employees	1	Board of Trustees
LBCC Foundation	1	LBCC Foundation
Community Member (non-employee) representing District #1	1	Trustee
Community Member (non-employee) representing District #2	1	Trustee
Community Member (non-employee) representing District #3	1	Trustee
Community Member (non-employee) representing District #4	1	Trustee
Community Member (non-employee) representing District #5	1	Trustee
Equal Employment Opportunity	1	Vice President, Human Resources (non-voting member)

- All search committee members are required to attend all meetings and there can be no substitutions once the hiring committee holds its first meeting.
- All search committee members receive training on the search process.
- BOT also selects a search committee chair.



4 RECRUITMENT OF APPLICANTS

- After the BOT selects a search firm, the search firm works with human resources to create the job profile. Then the search firm works with campus leadership and the BOT to revise the job profile before sharing the job profile with the senate, union, and other campus stakeholders.
 - Drafting the job profile is quick because the search firm and human resources often recycle previous templates.
- The search firm works with staff to advertise the position announcement in the district website, search firm's networks, CEO/Academic Affairs/Student Affairs listservs, and direct recruitment of potential candidates who are in the pipeline (have recently interviewed for other leadership positions).



5 SCREENING APPLICATIONS

- Using the District's Standard procedures, the search firm and HR prepare a meeting to onboard the search committee to the hiring process. The topics for onboarding include:
 - Compliance.
 - What BOT/LBCC is looking for in a new leader.
 - Timeline of the search.
 - Expectations.
 - If time permits the interview questions.
- Search firm works with search committee to develop screening criteria, which have to align with the criteria used to recruit applicants.



6 CONDUCTING FIRST ROUND INTERVIEWS

- Each candidate is asked to respond to a writing prompt.
 - The committee uses the writing prompt to evaluate candidates' on-demand writing skills.
- The committee gives each candidate the interview questions to review before the interview.
- Candidates have about 15 minutes to review the interview questions.
- Each individual interview is about 90 minutes.



7 CAMPUS FORUMS

- Campus forums are open discussions which provide campus and community members opportunities to ask the finalist questions.
- Each finalist is invited to be on campus for about 45-60 minutes.
- Finalist provides an opening statement.
- The search firm reviews submitted questions (these questions come from different stakeholders) and decides which questions to ask the finalists during the campus forum. Then committee members ask the vetted questions to the finalists during the campus forum.
- The search firm documents the campus forum and provides the information to the BOT to use in their decision-making.



8 BOARD OF TRUSTEES INTERVIEWS

- BOT interviews final candidates.
- Reference check information provided to the BOT.

Continuing on page 6.

- The interview questions asked by the BOT may have also been asked by the committee.
- After the initial interviews and the campus forum, the search committee and search firm will provide the BOT with information about each of the finalists. In order to not bias the BOT, the search committee does not disclose any of their candidate rankings.
- BOT usually make a decision within one to two days.



9

BOT APPROVES THE CONTRACT

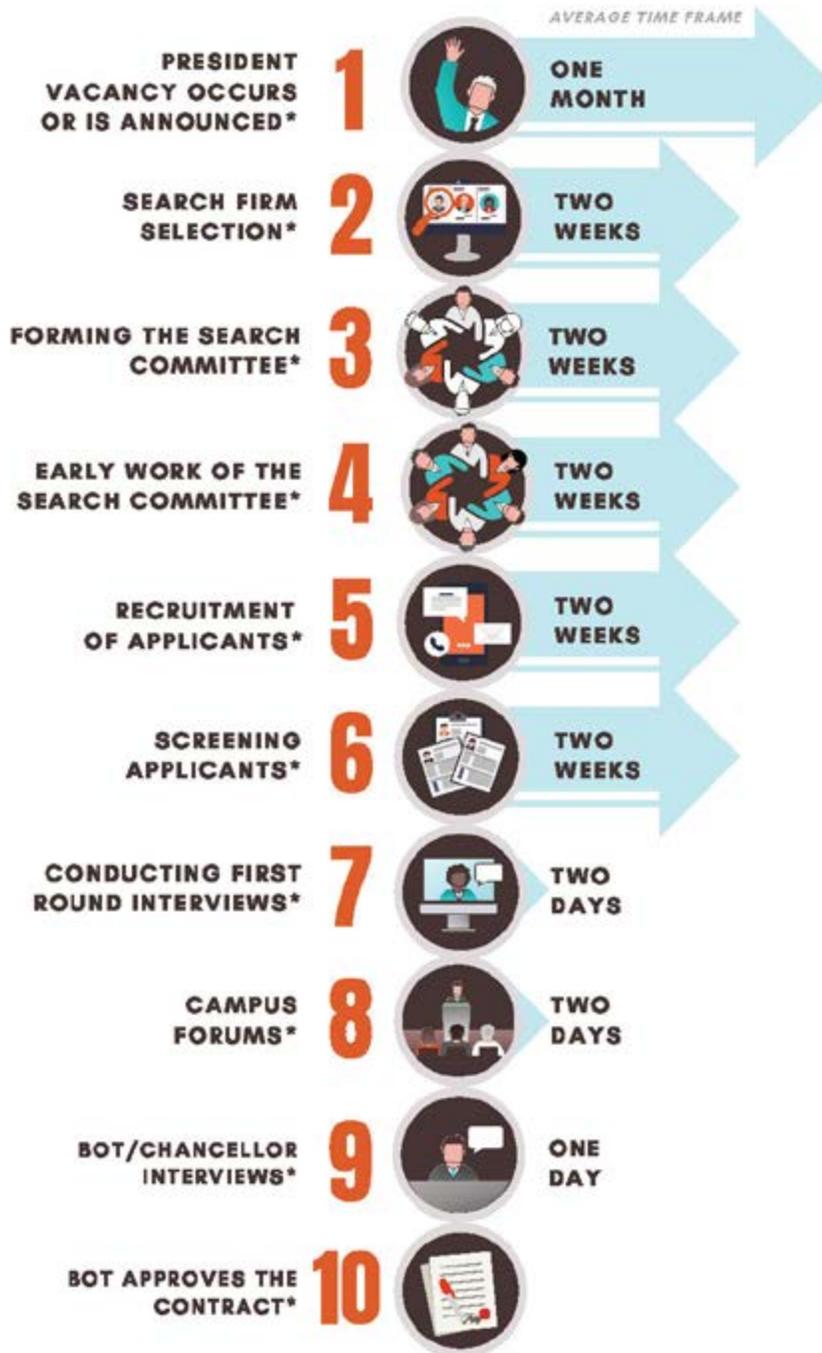
- BOT authorizes the Board President to enter into negotiations with the successful candidate for the position.
- BOT approves hiring contract with new Superintendent-President.

Please note: The outline is based on a review of policy available documents, newsletters, board of trustees meetings, and the Long Beach City College website.

Photo attribution: Roesling Nakamura Terada Architects.

STATE CENTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT SEARCH PROCESS

A MULTI-COLLEGE DISTRICT EXAMPLE



STATE CENTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT SEARCH PROCESS WITH DETAILS



1 PRESIDENT VACANCY OCCURS OR IS ANNOUNCED

- The board of trustees (BOT) approves search for new president.
- Chancellor follows the established search process.
- Chancellor keeps the board abreast of the progress of that process.



2 SEARCH FIRM SELECTION

- Possible bidding process to identify a search firm. Bid process is not necessary if there has been a recent search, as the previous firm can be used again.
- Sometimes the chancellor and BOT include additional steps to the bidding process.
- The chancellor and BOT follow the state district's procurement process.
- The chancellor and BOT use procurement information to invite search firms.
- Price tends to be the prominent criteria in identifying a search firm.
- BOT and the chancellor decide on search firm.
 - The BOT decides on the search firm for a chancellor position.
 - The chancellor decides on the search firm for a president position.
- The BOT does not need to approve the selection of a search firm.
- Search firm creates timeline for search process.



3 FORMING THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

- It is common for the chancellor and BOT to select the search firm and to form the search committee simultaneously.
- To form the search committee, the chancellor and BOT talk to academic senate president, classified senate president, labor union labor partners, management representatives about who might serve on the committee.
 - When including community members they also talk about the criteria to invite a community member (e.g., neighbor, business representative, community based organization, social justice advocate, politics like city council member).
 - The goal is to identify committee members who are diverse and provide different perspectives. They attempt to have diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.



4 EARLY WORK OF THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

- The search committee comes together to establish committee norms within the committee as well as norms for how to communicate with those outside of the committee.
- Search committee receives Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) training.
- A primary role of the search committee is to create the criteria to screen applicants.
 - Look at the job announcement and decide what are they going to look for in applications.
 - This includes the creation of rubrics by which to evaluate candidates.
 - Criteria will include:
 - Minimum qualifications – does the candidate meet them?

Continuing on page 4.

- Essential elements - what does the college value the most in a leader? This includes but is not limited to:
 - Cultural competency - how does the candidate show this?
 - Being a good fiscal stewardess – how will the candidate deal with funding cycles and other fiduciary responsibilities?
- Before looking at applications, the committee creates the interview questions for the first round of interviews.
 - HR reviews the questions to ensure that equity is represented in the questions.
 - Typically there are about 15 questions for about an hour interview.



5

RECRUITMENT OF APPLICANTS

- HR, search committee, chancellor, and BOT are involved in writing the job announcement.
 - The process starts with looking at the previous job announcement that was used. Questions considered when forming the job announcement might include:
 - What did the college look for in the last search?
 - Did it serve them?
 - What are the important topics?
 - What is the college working towards? Is it growth or fiscal stability? Do they need someone who can lead during a time of crisis?
 - The next step is to equitize the job announcements:
 - The equity committee reviews the announcement and provides feedback.
 - Ensure that the language is inclusive, specifically to communities of color.

Continuing on page 5.

- The position is open approximately 45–60 days.
 - The goal for the college is to have 18 to 25 applicants.
- The search firm’s role in recruitment is to identify individuals that are looking to advance their careers or are looking for a college presidency. The search firm also advertises the positions in by various journals, emails to listservs, HR promote in various magazines.



6 SCREENING APPLICATIONS

- Once the questions are submitted and approved, the application files are released electronically to the committee.
 - The search committee typically has a week to review the applications.
- The search committee uses their rubric to review the applications and ranks each applicant.
- The search committee comes together to share their applicant rankings to come to a consensus.
 - This meeting is used to discuss discrepancies.
 - The search committee uses a cut off to determine applicants with higher scores.
- The number of candidates invited to interview will vary but can range between six to ten applicants.



7 CONDUCTING FIRST ROUND INTERVIEWS

- Search committee is reminded that the process is confidential.
- Applicants are notified to schedule interviews.
- Four to five interviews are conducted a day, each lasting approximately 60–90 minutes.

Continuing on page 6.

- The goal is to complete all interviews within one to two days.
- After interviews are complete the search committee deliberates. In some cases, deliberation takes an entire day and in other cases, the search committee will deliberate at the end of each interview day.
- HR reviews the completed rubrics to ensure there are no legal issues.
- The search committee selects three-five finalists and sends the list to the chancellor for final approval.
- After approval, the search committee notifies the finalists and schedules the campus forums.



8

CAMPUS FORUMS

- Finalists spend one to two days visiting the campus.
- Each finalist is asked structured questions by the committee and questions that are collected from the community.
 - The forum is televised/streamed via zoom for the community to watch.
- The campus forums are not scored but community members, faculty, staff, and students can reach out to the BOT to provide feedback on each finalist.



9

BOT/CHANCELLOR INTERVIEWS

- Both the BOT and chancellor interview the finalists.
- BOT asks interview questions regarding how finalist will interact with them and about budget, buildings, and bonds.
- The chancellor ask interview questions regarding working with the academic senate, operations, how to advance equity efforts, and other "big picture" questions.
- The chancellor identifies the top finalist and presents it to BOT.



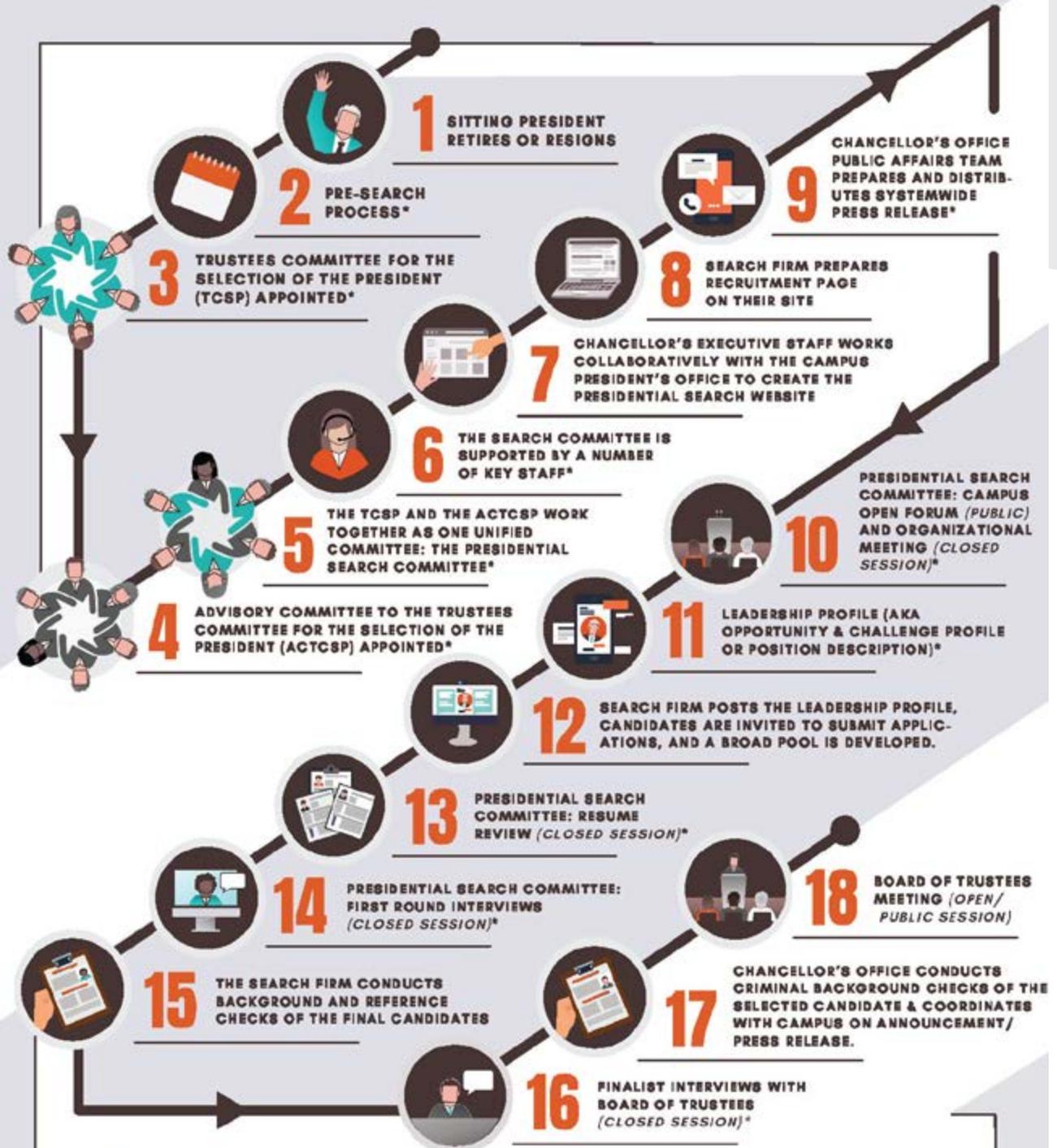
10 BOT APPROVES THE CONTRACT

- BOT votes on the contract for the new president.

Please note: The outline is based on a review of policy available documents, newsletters, board of trustees meetings, and the Long Beach City College website.

Photo attribution: Reedley College Website.

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH PROCESS - 2022



BENSIMON
& ASSOCIATES

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH PROCESS - 2022 (WITH DETAILS)



1 SITTING PRESIDENT RETIRES OR RESIGNS



2 PRE-SEARCH PROCESS

- The Chancellor (in consultation with the Chair of the Board) determines the Board meeting date upon which the finalist candidates will be interviewed. The Board meets every other month: January, March, May, July, September, and November.
- The Chancellor and executive staff prepare an initial presidential search timeline.
- The Chancellor's executive staff engages search firm(s) with which we discuss search timeline, recruitment process, advertising plans, etc.



3 TRUSTEES COMMITTEE FOR THE SELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT (TCSP) APPOINTED

Per the [Board of Trustees Policy for the Selection of Presidents](#), the Chair of the Board, in consultation with the Chancellor, appoints a Trustees Committee for the Selection of the President (TCSP) for the campus with an impending vacancy.

TCSP is composed of the following members:

- Chair of the Board.
- Four Trustees.
- Chancellor.
- The Board Chair designates one of the trustees as Chair of the TCSP.
- A trustee's selection to serve on the committee may be based on their proximity to and relationship with the campus, frequency of service on previous executive searches, and diversity.



4 ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE TRUSTEES COMMITTEE FOR THE SELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT (ACTCSP) APPOINTED

The Chancellor, on behalf of and in consultation with the Board Chair, appoints an advisory group to the TCSP, known as the Advisory Committee to the Trustees Committee for the Selection of the President (ACTCSP).

ACTCSP is composed of the following campus constituents:

- Chair of the Academic Senate.
- Two faculty representatives: selected by the campus faculty.
- One member of the campus support staff: selected by the staff.
- Two students: selected by the duly constituted representatives of the campus student body.
- One member of the campus Advisory Board: selected by that board.
- One alumnus/alumna of the campus selected by the campus Alumni Association.
- One Vice President or Academic Dean: selected by the Chancellor.
- Two campus external community members: selected by the Chancellor.
- In addition to the campus constituents, one President from another CSU campus is selected by the Chancellor.



5 THE TCSP AND THE ACTCSP WORK TOGETHER AS ONE UNIFIED COMMITTEE: THE PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

The Presidential Search Committee convenes and participates equally at the following meetings:

- Organizational meeting and campus open forum.
- Resume review and narrowing of the pool.
- First round (or semifinalist) interviews.



6 THE SEARCH COMMITTEE IS SUPPORTED BY:

- Chancellor's Chief of Staff.
- Chancellor's Deputy Chief of Staff.
- Senior Advisor to the Chancellor.
- Vice Chancellor of HR.
- CSU General Counsel.

**Note: The Vice Chancellor of Human Resources serves in an advisory capacity but is not on the committee.*



7 CHANCELLOR'S EXECUTIVE STAFF WORKS COLLABORATIVELY WITH THE CAMPUS PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO CREATE THE PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH WEBSITE

The search website is hosted on the campus website, is accessible to the public, and includes the following information or tabs:

- Roster of the Presidential Search Committee.
- Option to submit feedback/input via a survey.
- Option to submit questions and/or nominations.
- Information and access to view/listen to the upcoming open forum.
- Link to view the archived open forum.
- Leadership Profile.



8 SEARCH FIRM PREPARES RECRUITMENT PAGE ON THEIR SITE

In collaboration with Chancellor's executive staff and the President's Office, an initial recruitment advertisement is developed and posted across various diverse outlets.



9 CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE PUBLIC AFFAIRS TEAM PREPARES AND DISTRIBUTES SYSTEMWIDE PRESS RELEASE

The press release announces the search, confirms the presidential search committee and provides information on the upcoming open forum.



10 PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE: CAMPUS OPEN FORUM (*PUBLIC*) AND ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING (*CLOSED SESSION*)

- The committee reviews the search process, timeline, and confidentiality. Committee members sign a nondisclosure agreement.
- At the open forum (in-person and also livestreamed), the campus and extended community has the opportunity to share their views regarding professional qualifications, experiences and personal attributes they believe the next President must possess in order to be successful. They may also share opportunities and challenges the next President may encounter.
- Following the open forum, the committee and search team meet in closed session to debrief and discuss issues/themes that were shared at the open forum.
- Committee members also provide their own input (and/or on behalf of their constituent groups) the opportunities/challenges for the campus and discuss desired attributes of the next President.
- Representatives from various constituency groups often submit nominations and feedback in the form of letters, open forums, and surveys to the search firm and Chancellor's Office.
- Comments are compiled from the committee, campus stakeholders and external community to create the Leadership Profile.



11 LEADERSHIP PROFILE (AKA OPPORTUNITY & CHALLENGE PROFILE OR POSITION DESCRIPTION)

- The search firm collects information from the organizational meeting and open forum and any feedback/input received from the online survey – and prepares the first draft of the Leadership Profile.

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- The Leadership Profile is distributed to the full committee for their feedback/input.
- After further review and edits, the Leadership Profile is finalized by the Chancellor.
- The process of reviewing and finalizing the Leadership Profile may span from one to two weeks.
- The final Leadership Profile is posted online to the following sites:
 1. Campus' presidential search webpage.
 2. Search firm's recruitment page.
- Committee members are encouraged to share the document widely with their networks.



12

SEARCH FIRM POSTS THE LEADERSHIP PROFILE, CANDIDATES ARE INVITED TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS, AND A BROAD POOL IS DEVELOPED



13

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE: RESUME REVIEW (CLOSED SESSION)

- The committee reviews and comments on all applications submitted by candidates.
- They Identify semifinalists to move forward to the first-round interviews.
- Vice Chancellor of HR will lead a discussion on implicit bias and ensure compliance.



14

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE: FIRST ROUND INTERVIEWS (CLOSED SESSION)

- The full committee participates in candidate interviews and the deliberations that lead to the selection of the final candidates.
- Vice Chancellor of HR will lead a discussion on implicit bias and ensure compliance.



15 THE SEARCH FIRM CONDUCTS BACKGROUND AND REFERENCE CHECKS OF THE FINAL CANDIDATES



16 FINALIST INTERVIEWS WITH BOARD OF TRUSTEES (CLOSED SESSION)

- The Board of Trustees participates in candidate interviews and deliberations and identify the next President.
- Vice Chancellor of HR will lead a discussion on implicit bias and ensure compliance.



17 CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE CONDUCTS CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS OF THE SELECTED CANDIDATE AND COORDINATES WITH CAMPUS ON ANNOUNCEMENT/PRESS RELEASE



18 BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING (OPEN/PUBLIC SESSION)

The Board Chair announces the next President synchronously with campus announcement/systemwide press release. The Board convenes to announce and approve the selected President's compensation.

Please note: The CSU is intentional and committed to maintaining the confidentiality of candidates; as such, **the process is a closed search. The CSU does not disclose candidate information. No one outside of the Presidential Search Committee and Board of Trustees will be notified of the new president until that individual is selected and confirmed.*

Photo attribution: Kevin Chen, Cal State Fullerton Alumni Facebook Page.

AN OUTLINE OF THE UC CHANCELLOR SEARCH PROCESS

CHANCELLOR VACANCY OCCURS OR IS ANNOUNCED*

1



Note: The policy, Regents 7102, that governs the process by which a chancellor is selected and appointed in the UC system was amended in July 2020. The outline presented in this map reflects the new policy changes. Footnotes are added throughout to note specific changes.

SEARCH FIRM SELECTION*

2



SEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE FORMATION*

3



LEARNING & LISTENING*

4



DEFINING THE CRITERIA*

5



BUILDING CANDIDATE POOL*

6



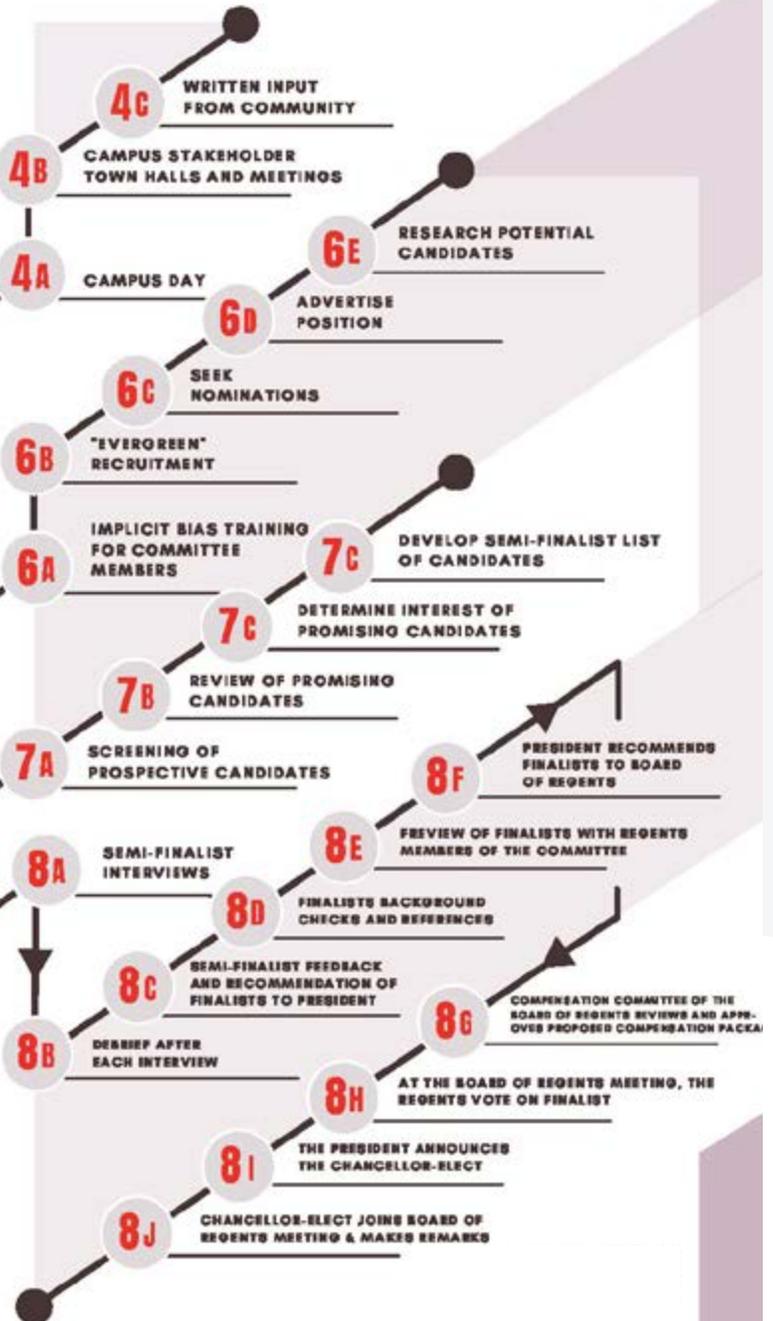
WINNOWING*

7



SELECTION*

8



AN OUTLINE OF THE UC CHANCELLOR SEARCH PROCESS



1 CHANCELLOR VACANCY OCCURS OR IS ANNOUNCED



2 SEARCH FIRM SELECTION

- The UC has a master agreement for selecting search firms. The current list includes at least 30 approved firms, however one firm—Isaacson Miller—has managed at least the last six searches.
- The role of the search firm is to staff the search advisory committee (hereafter, “committee”), to identify potential candidates, to determine potential candidates’ interest in the chancellorship, to do due diligence and background checks on candidates, and to facilitate other operational aspects of the search (e.g., posting advertisements, preparing materials, organizing committee meetings).
- President selects the search firm after meeting with the Regent members of the committee .



3 SEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE FORMATION

- The President is the chair of the committee and serves in an ex officio capacity. The Board of Regents Chair is also on the committee in an ex officio capacity. Both play a role in soliciting nominations and selecting 17 individuals to serve on the committee.

Continuing on page 3.

¹ Prior to the July 2020 Regents 7102 policy changes, the President selected the search firm before forming the committee.

The committee members include:

Committee Member	# of Representatives	Appointed by:
UC President	1	<i>Ex officio</i>
Chair of the UC Board of Regents	1	<i>Ex officio</i>
Regents	5	The Chair of the UC Board of Regents
Faculty	5	<p>The UC President:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One is either the Chair or Vice Chair of the Academic Council • One is a faculty member from a campus that is not the focus of the search, chosen from a list submitted by the Academic Senate's University wide Committee on Committees • Three are faculty members from the campus that is the focus of the search, chosen from a list of names submitted by the campus Academic Senate Committee on Committees
Graduate Student	1	The campus graduate student association
Undergraduate Student	1	The campus undergraduate student association
Alumni Representative	1	The campus alumni association
Foundation Representative	1	<i>Chosen from a list of names submitted by the campus foundation</i>
Staff Employee	1	The campus staff assembly

Continuing on page 4.

The committee is formed in two stages².

Stage 1:

- Board of Regents Chair first selects the 5 Regents.
- The President then consults with the Regents members before forming the rest of the committee and discusses the search process.

Stage 2:

- The President writes to leaders of various stakeholder groups noted above to solicit names of individuals to serve on the committee.
 - The Academic Senate's University wide Committee on Committees must put forward at least 3 names.
 - The campus Academic Senate Committee on Committees must put forward at least 6 names.
 - The campus foundation must put forward at least 3 names.
 - The campus staff association must put forward at least 3 names.
 - The undergraduate and graduate student government and campus alumni association leaders can select one person each.

The President convenes the committee with an eye toward constructing a balanced committee that is diverse and includes diverse viewpoints, skills, backgrounds, and experiences.

Once the committee is formed, the President announces the members.

²Prior to the July 2020 Regents 7102 policy changes:

- The President writes to leaders of various stakeholder groups noted above to solicit names of individuals to serve on the committee. There is no minimum number of names that each stakeholder group must provide.
- At the same time, the Board of Regents Chair selects the Regents to serve on the committee. Things like time, availability, interest, and diversity (demographic and experience) factor into which Regents serve on a search.
- The faculty on the committee formed a faculty sub-committee. Having a faculty sub-committee is practice, not policy.



4 LEARNING & LISTENING

- **4a. Campus Day:** The committee's first meeting happens during Campus Day. In closed sessions, the committee receive feedback from invited guests on the needs and requirements of the next Chancellor. The President offers remarks, various campus groups make presentations, and there is a lunch with alumni, donors, and community leaders³.
- **4b. Campus Stakeholder Town Halls and Meetings:** These take place after Campus Day and include specific sessions with undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff. Committee members may also attend stakeholder group meetings such as the meetings of the student assemblies.
- **4c. Written Input from Community:** Members of the campus community are encouraged to submit input via email or anonymous survey.



5 DEFINING THE CRITERIA

- Develop Search Criteria, Chancellor Position Description, and Outreach Strategy:
 - Developing criteria is based on the Learning & Listening efforts⁴.
 - The Regents may periodically produce a general job description that the campus and search committee can add to.
 - UCOP HR has a template job description that may be used as the basis for chancellor searches. What the president and search committee learn from the "Learning & Listening" events is then incorporated into this template.

³ Prior to July 2020 Regents 7102 policy changes, the faculty sub-committee met for the first time after Campus Day.

⁴ Prior to the July 2020 Regents 7102 policy changes, the faculty sub-committee was responsible for defining search criteria and the outreach strategy, seeking guidance as needed from the rest of the committee.



6 BUILDING A CANDIDATE POOL

- **6a. Implicit Bias Training for Committee Members:** This is typically part of the search committee's first meeting and is about an hour long.
- **6b. "Evergreen" recruitment:** The president should be continuously seeking out potential candidates to serve as a UC chancellor.
- **6c. Seek Nominations:** The President seeks nominations from UC and peer institution leaders. Campus members are encouraged to submit nominations via email to the search firm.
- **6d. Advertise Position:** The position is advertised on a dedicated campus webpage as well as placed in various publication outlets (including *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Diverse Jobs*, *Hispanic Outlook*, *Women in Higher Education*, *Insight into Diversity*, *Vet Jobs*), and the search firm's website.
- **6e. Research Potential Candidates:** The committee, aided by the search firm, examines sitting chancellors, presidents, provosts and deans at peer institutions (nationally, internationally).
 - The Report of the Regents Working Group noted that the search firms provide 80 percent or more of the candidates.



7 WINNOWING

- **7a. Initial Review/Screening of Prospective Candidates:** The first review/screening is done by the search firm. The first cut reduces the initial list to a few hundred candidates for the search committee to consider in more depth⁵.
- **7b. Review of Promising Candidates:** This initial review results in at least five, and usually more, candidates for review by the full committee. This work likely comprises the search committee's second and maybe third meeting.

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⁵ Prior to the July 2020 Regents 7102 policy changes, the faculty sub-committee, working with the president, did the initial vetting of candidates. The long list could include up to 700-800 candidates. The sub-committee had a green-yellow-red-light system for categorizing candidates and presented their initial review to the entire search committee. This initial review took anywhere between 2 and 4 months.

- **7c. Determine Interest of Promising Candidates:** Conducted by search firm.
- **7d. Develop Semi-Finalist List of Candidates:** The number of semi-finalists could be 5-8, 10-12, or up to 24, depending on the committee.



8

SELECTION

- **8a. Semi-Finalist Interviews:** Conducted by the committee at a hotel off-campus (pre-pandemic).
 - There is no public disclosure of semi-finalists, no public meetings.
- **8b. Debrief after each interview:** Committee members spend time discussing candidate strengths and weaknesses.
- **8c. Semi-Finalist Feedback and Recommendation of Finalists to President:** Determining the finalist list is the search committee's final meeting. The number of finalists is generally 3, sometimes less.
- **8d. Finalists Background Checks and References:** Conducted by the search firm; the president may conduct their own reference checks.
- **8e. Review of Finalists with Regents Members of the Committee:** The President discusses the finalist(s) with the Regents members of the Committee and makes a recommendation for their approval, prior to the final recommendation to the full Board of Regents.
- **8f. President Recommends Finalist to Board of Regents.**
- **8g. Compensation Committee of the Board of Regents Reviews and Approves Proposed Compensation Package.** The committee votes to present the recommendation to the Board of Regents.
- **8h. At Board of Regents Meeting, the Regents Vote on Finalist:** This includes public remarks from the President on the finalist's merit and fit for the position, as well as comments from Regent members on the candidate.
- **8i. The President announces the Chancellor-Elect.**

Continuing on page 8.

- **8j. Chancellor-Elect joins Board of Regents meeting and makes remarks.**

Please Note: The content outlined is based on a review of publicly available documents (e.g., UC Regents policies, chancellor search websites and related webpages, student newspaper articles, etc.), as well as documents shared by the College Futures Foundation (e.g., Report of the Regents Working Group).

Photo attribution: The UC Berkeley School of Law Website.

