



**MONTCLAIR STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

**University Senate**

## **Resolution: Presidential Search 2021**

May 19, 2021 - Approved by the University Senate May

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The University Senate wishes to express its disappointment and concern with the lack of transparency and community stakeholder involvement in the current presidential search process. The search was a missed opportunity for the Board of Trustees (BOT) to strengthen their relationship with campus stakeholders, to continue campus community renewal, and to reflect together on the future of Montclair State University.

For more than 50 years, Montclair State College/University presidential searches have been an open process. That is, the search committee membership representing different constituencies was announced to the campus community; the committee members chose a few candidates for on-campus interviews; the CVs of the finalist candidates were posted for the campus community to see; each finalist met with the entire membership of the search committee; and each finalist met with different constituents of the university community in open forums to introduce themselves and answer questions. Finally, in a democratic process, the membership of the entire search committee voted on the candidate to recommend for the presidency to the BOT.

Unfortunately, during the present presidential search, the BOT and the administration ignored these long standing precedents. The BOT announced the list of committee members, and while those members chose finalists, the BOT dismissed remaining search committee members from any further duties. Search committee members did not participate in finalist interviews. Furthermore, the finalists' CVs were not posted publicly, the finalists did not meet with constituents of the campus community, the complete group of search committee members had no vote in choosing the final candidate, and the BOT denied the request for an American Federation of Teachers Local 1904 (AFT) observer to the committee. An AFT representative has served on each of the search committees since the founding of the Local.

A presidential search is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the Office of the President and campus constituents and to instill confidence in the process, the current leadership, and incoming leadership. As a search unfolds, and stakeholders weigh in, the journey toward choosing the next leader is as important as the person who is selected. A secretive process in the name of confidentiality, however, undermines stakeholders' confidence in the strength and effectiveness of the university leadership. The examples of numerous other universities' top searches, and even previous searches at Montclair State, show that it is possible to create a search process that is both confidential to candidates, and engaging and transparent to

stakeholders. Examples include [Ramapo College of New Jersey](#), [Evergreen College](#) and [The University of North Carolina System](#). An open search process is vital to establishing trust and credibility in the new hire across the campus community. A liberal education empowers all involved, so that a diversity of perspectives can be called upon during moments of rapid change and growth. This requires the experience of autonomy and communication. Greater inclusion in the search process reinforces those qualities in the faculty, librarians, specialists, and staff, who share it with our students. Shared governance is an investment toward those students who ultimately determine the future success in the vision of, for, and by the university.

Institutional transitions are challenging for all in the best of times. During this particularly difficult period, rather than the presidential search bringing the university community together, it has become a source of confusion and suspicion. The latest, opaque presidential search lends itself to an inauspicious beginning for the incoming President, who now faces the challenges of mending fences and instilling confidence in their ability to lead. We are invested in the success of our new President and the University. Against this backdrop, the University Senate is committed to advocating that future presidential searches be conducted as transparent and [community-oriented processes](#), reflecting our institution's core values and beliefs.