

Higher Education **RECRUITING** **REPORT** 2023

Hunt Scanlon Media examines the growing complexity of recruiting top leadership roles in today's colleges and universities.



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Hunt Scanlon Media has been defining and informing the senior talent management sector for over 30 years. Our global staffing intelligence data comes in many forms: daily newswires, annual leadership and state of the industry reports, market intelligence sector briefings, industry rankings and our flagship newsletter Executive Search Review. Our exclusive news briefings, interviews, industry trends reports and rankings, forecasts and expert commentary offer unique insight and market intelligence as we track global talent management developments. Since our inception, talent management professionals worldwide have turned to Hunt Scanlon Media.

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leadership and talent solutions consultants who service them.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Casting a Wider Net For Top Leaders

Recruiting senior leaders in the higher education sector has become a dynamic and evolving process. As universities face numerous challenges, including financial constraints, enrollment declines, and the need to prioritize diversity and inclusion, the demand for visionary and transformational leaders has never been higher.

In recent years, the higher education sector has witnessed a significant increase in leadership turnover. Factors such as impending retirements, the impact of the pandemic, and financial pressures have contributed to this trend. According to data from The Chronicle of Higher Education, more presidents announced their resignations in 2022 compared to the previous year. This wave of turnover has resulted in a surge in executive-level searches, surpassing the numbers seen in the last decade.

In this report, Hunt Scanlon Media will provide you with insights directly from experts in the higher education sector on this past year.

When searching for senior leaders, universities are seeking individuals who possess a diverse skill-set and a keen business acumen. The ability to navigate complex financial landscapes, think innovatively to increase revenue, foster relationships, and develop strategic partnerships are highly valued skills. Moreover, leaders who can inspire and empower others while addressing the pressing needs of the institution are sought after. Institutions require leaders who can drive transformational change and adapt to the evolving higher education landscape.

Challenges in Recruiting

Search consultants say that recruiting senior leaders in higher education presents its own set of challenges. Boards must engage in thorough pre-search discussions to identify the unique opportunities, challenges, and goals the new leader will face. Without this crucial groundwork, the search process can encounter significant hurdles later on. Moreover, the increasing demand for leaders who can champion diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice has led to the creation of new positions, such as chief diversity officers. Finding qualified individuals who possess the expertise to address these pressing issues while ensuring inclusivity across the institution is a critical challenge for recruitment.

In recruiting senior leaders for colleges and universities, there has been a growing emphasis on finding candidates who possess a blend of experience in both academic settings and outside education organizations, according to Tobin Anselmi, managing partner, head of interim and consulting services operations at **The Christopher Group**. “The goal is to identify individuals who can bring diverse perspectives and innovative approaches to address the complex challenges faced by higher education institutions today,” he said. “While academic experience is crucial to understanding the unique

dynamics of educational environments, the inclusion of leaders with outside experience helps bring fresh ideas, industry connections, and valuable insights from different sectors. This combination allows for the integration of best practices and cutting-edge strategies that can drive institutional growth, enhance student success, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and effectively navigate the evolving landscape of education.”

Mr. Anselmi says that universities and colleges face several issues in today’s evolving educational landscape. One is the rapid advancement of technology and the need to navigate the complexities of online learning, which has grown substantially due to the pandemic. “Institutions seek leaders who are tech-savvy, capable of leveraging digital tools and platforms to enhance teaching and learning experiences,” Mr. Anselmi said. “Additionally, they value leaders who possess a deep understanding of the diverse experiences students bring, acknowledging the varied backgrounds, perspectives, and challenges they face. These leaders need to think beyond the traditional on-campus, in-class experience and bring innovative approaches to cater to the evolving needs of students in a digital age. By embracing technology, fostering inclusivity, and promoting alternative modes of education, these leaders can drive transformative change and ensure the success and engagement of students in a rapidly changing educational environment.”

“Schools should prioritize finding leaders who possess a wide range of experiences, are tech-savvy, and demonstrate a deep understanding of the social dynamics and challenges faced by the college-aged population,” said Mr. Anselmi. “With access to information being vastly different than in the past, leaders who can adapt to these changes and leverage technology while also understanding the

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AGB Search Roderick J. McDavis, Managing Principal (202) 776-0856	Keeling & Associates Eric Engstrom, President (212) 229-4750
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unique needs and challenges of students today are highly sought after by schools.”

Mr. Anselmi also notes that The Christopher Group always casts a wide net to ensure the firm produces diversity in all searches. “In recent years, educational institutions, like many other organizations, have significantly increased their efforts to enhance DE&I,” he said. “Universities and colleges have often been at the forefront of these initiatives, recognizing the importance of fostering diverse perspectives, representation, and inclusivity within their leadership ranks. While progress has been made, it is important to acknowledge that there are variations among institutions, with some universities demonstrating more advanced DE&I efforts than others. Continued commitment and improvement in these areas are necessary to ensure that all schools effectively promote diversity and inclusion within their leadership teams and throughout their campuses.”

More Senior Leaders Retiring

“More senior leaders are considering retirement, many are facing burn-out since COVID,” said Shahauna Siddiqui, a partner in Calgary with **DHR Global**. “All hires are requiring more skills in external relations, including government relations. Many colleges and universities are examining curriculum to ensure they are keeping up with the times and are more multi-disciplinary focused as well as adding in more opportunity for innovation and experiential learning. Institutions are facing the challenge of hybrid course offerings, as well as micro-credentials.”

Mental health for students, meanwhile, is still big issue, along with tuition costs, and housing. “The push is on to increase access to post-secondary for underrepresented groups such as low-income students, students whose parents did not attend postsecondary as well as students with disabilities and indigenous students,” Ms. Siddiqui said.

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“Budgeting is increasingly a challenge for many institutions with lower government support/funding and the economy being unstable. Technology is also a big issue, with the increase of digitization required beyond learning/teaching. In Canada, international students are an increasing population and require different sources of revenue support and increasingly higher cost centers.”

“Leaders are pushing for more multi-disciplinary collaboration and research. Leaders require extensive influencing skills and external stakeholder management,” Ms. Siddiqui said. “They need to the skills to ensure their institution stands out amongst an increasingly competitive environment, and yet collaborates internationally on research.”

Significant burnout challenges since COVID within faculties remain, and this has resulted in some senior leaders who might be ready to take on a new leadership challenge to hit pause and remain in their current role, according to Kenny Gregor, associate partner in Calgary with DHR. “Others who are more senior are also starting to opt for early retirement instead of a new challenge,” he said. “Additionally, since COVID, we have found that relocating candidates has become more challenging as many individuals are making more family-oriented decisions including wanting to stay closer to home with aging parents etc. Conversely, we have noticed a trend in Canadian ex-pats wanting to come back to Canada for senior leadership roles for these same reasons. Within Canada, some leaders who may have moved across the country earlier in their career, are becoming increasingly interested in coming back to their former institution closer to home if the right opening comes up.”

Many of DHR’s clients have been talking about challenges of AI tools like ChatGPT which have really disrupted the post secondary space. “Senior leaders

need to stay up to date on where things are going with this technology and be able to help create, adapt, and enforce policies to address it’s use,” Mr. Gregor said. “That being said, many also view AI as an opportunity to transform the way we teach. Micro credentialing and applied research increasing student experience is also something we are seeing.”

DHR has also seen committees that start processes by saying that they are interested in diverse candidate pools that include those who may be earlier in their career and may have not been given the opportunity to take on key leadership roles. That said, at the end of the day when DHR goes to present candidates, committees continue to gravitate to those who are more experienced and those who have already held similar roles. The firm has seen institutions give more junior internal candidates the chance to compete for these senior positions in recent years however, and they view these processes as a learning and development experience for the individual even if they aren’t the successful candidate.

“The focus is clearly there with all of our clients and the results are starting to show in terms of the candidate pools and the successful placed candidates, but there is still more work to be done on this front,” said Mr. Gregor. “The committees we work with are starting to become more diverse than they once were, and they are holding candidates to higher standards when it comes to EDI and indigenization. Candidates more and more need to bring with them tangible examples of initiatives they have led or played a major part in to help improve diversity and inclusion or indigenization efforts at their institution. Just talking about it is not enough and committees want to see action and accomplishments in the space.”

Seeking Candidates from Other Sectors

“There are a variety of individuals who may show interest in higher education after working in another

IN THE NEWS

Greenwood Asher & Associates Places President and CEO for University of the District of Columbia

Greenwood Asher & Associates

After an extensive, seven month search, Miramar Beach, FL-based executive recruitment firm **Greenwood Asher & Associates** has placed Maurice D. Edington as the new president and CEO of the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). Marion Frenche, associate vice president of executive search and practice leader for diversity, equity, and inclusion, led the assignment for the search firm, guided by the university's board of trustees-appointed presidential search committee.

Dr. Edington most recently served as executive vice president and chief operating officer at Florida A&M University (FAMU). He succeeds Ronald Mason Jr., UDC's longest-serving president, who remains a faculty member at the university's David A. Clarke School of Law.

UDC's new leader's areas of focus are to include increasing student success, increasing support for faculty, expanding academic program offerings, increasing research productivity, enrollment and degree production, fundraising, external relations, and economic development.

"Dr. Edington's academic and leadership acumen, fundraising abilities, and passion for supporting students and faculty make him uniquely qualified to guide the University of the District of Columbia to the next level," said Christopher D. Bell, chair of the university board of trustees. "He will inherit an exceptional foundation that will grow the university into an even greater, more successful educational environment that will have a lasting impact on students, faculty, staff, and the greater District community."

A Strong Track Record

UDC's new leader is an accomplished scientist, educator, and university administrator with a proven track record of success in

improving student retention and graduation rates. He brings more than 20 years of higher education leadership experience to his new role.

During his tenure at FAMU, Dr. Edington also served as provost and vice president for academic affairs, where he oversaw academic programs, activities, and services for 14 colleges/schools, and all institutional and specialized accreditation activities. Among other positions at FAMU, he also served as vice president for strategic planning, analysis, and institutional effectiveness, where he was responsible for overseeing the university's assessment, accreditation, academic program quality, institutional research, reporting, and strategic planning functions.

Dr. Edington is a physical chemist by training with a research specialty in ultrafast laser spectroscopy. He conducts research and provides training to faculty in STEM education, focusing on using active learning instructional strategies to enhance critical thinking skills.

The University of the District of Columbia is the only public university in the nation's capital and the only exclusively urban land-grant university in the U.S. It is a historically black university committed to a broad mission of education, research, and community service. Established by abolitionist Myrtilla Miner in 1851, UDC offers workforce training, professional certification, and more than 80 undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Proven Search Firm

Greenwood Asher & Associates is a women-owned executive search firm with a diverse consulting team and extensive experience in executive search, consulting, and training for education markets including elementary, secondary, higher education, university systems, campuses and non-profit organizations including associations, service, and cultural institutions.

sector," said Shawn M. Hartman, senior vice president and COO of **Academic Search**. "Most often, these individuals may be former military leaders, those who have been in higher education earlier in their career as faculty or administrators and left for the corporate or non-profit world. Particularly when looking at the presidential role, those who serve as members of the board of trustees for colleges and universities (many being alumni as well) may turn to higher education. For public institutions where the state government plays a significant role in the appointment of trustees, the governor or state legislature could also encourage

political appointees/state politicians to move into this sector."

"We also see individuals who have run major businesses being encouraged to apply for presidencies," Mr. Hartman said. "For example, if the board of trustees believes that they need to appoint a leader who can create greater efficiencies and help stabilize the institution's finances, they may look for someone outside of the higher education sector. The reason why these individuals are attracted to higher education varies significantly—those who have retired early from the corporate world may find a career in

higher education appealing as it provides them with a new set of challenges, and they may believe that they have the skill set to contribute very positively towards the management and operation of an institution.”

Those from the military come from environments where they build strong teams, and the higher education environment has a similar appeal, according to Mr. Hartman. “Trustees, particularly those who are alums, have a deep love and care for the institution and believe that their knowledge of the institution as a student and then as a trustee really provides them with a unique ability to strengthen an institution,” he said. “Politicians who shift into academics often do so as their political term of office has ended”

“Schools should prioritize finding leaders who possess a wide range of experiences, are tech-savvy, and demonstrate a deep understanding of the social dynamics and challenges faced by the college-aged population.”

“We know that in our work at Academic Search, there are times when it is helpful to look at other sectors when recruiting candidates during a search,” Mr. Hartman said. “Individuals from other sectors may bring the right skill set and alignment with the mission of the institution, along with the desire to make a difference through their role, without having a background of working at a higher education institution.”

Colleges and universities today face various challenges, and the leadership they seek must address these issues, according to Michael J.R.

Wheless, co-founder, principal and consultant at **Anthem Executive**. “Financial sustainability is a pressing concern, requiring leaders who can develop innovative revenue streams, optimize resource allocation, and ensure long-term viability,” he said. “Student success and retention are also paramount, necessitating leaders who can implement evidence-based practices, leverage data analytics, and foster a student-centered culture. Institutions also grapple with demands for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion. They seek leaders who can advance these goals through inclusive policies, practices, and initiatives.”

Mr. Wheless also points to technological advancements and the demand for online and hybrid learning present ongoing challenges. “Leaders must harness technology to deliver innovative educational experiences, expand online offerings, and address cybersecurity concerns,” he said. “To address these challenges, universities seek leaders who possess a clear vision, strategic thinking, and innovation. Collaboration, diversity, and sustainability are also crucial. Leaders must foster a culture of innovation, build strong partnerships, and integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations.”

Younger Candidates

Mr. Wheless notes that a significant factor contributing to the appointment of younger leaders is the population trend and the ongoing mass retirement phase until 2035. “This demographic shift necessitates the consideration of younger candidates due to the scarcity of experienced professionals available for leadership positions,” he said. “While there may be inherent risks in selecting untested candidates, it becomes crucial for institutions to partner with search firms that have expertise in identifying and assessing the potential of these individuals. This population trend is a driving force

behind the search for younger leaders who can step into key roles and provide continuity in leadership as experienced professionals retire. With a diminishing pool of seasoned leaders, colleges and universities recognize the need to cultivate a new generation of talent capable of guiding institutions into the future.”

However, appointing younger leaders does come with certain risks. “They may have limited experience and face unique challenges as they navigate complex organizational structures and industry dynamics,” said Mr. Wheless. “To mitigate these risks, institutions must work closely with search firms that have the expertise to identify and assess the potential of these younger candidates. These firms possess a deep understanding of the skills, qualities, and leadership potential necessary for success in senior positions.”

Colleges and universities have made significant strides in upping their diversity and inclusion efforts, but there is still work to be done. “Recognizing the importance of fostering inclusive campus environments, institutions have placed a greater emphasis on diversity in their leadership recruitment efforts,” said Mr. Wheless. “However, achieving true diversity and inclusion requires ongoing commitment and intentional actions. Efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion have been crucial in creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for students, faculty, and staff. While some states have implemented restrictions on DEI initiatives, colleges and universities can focus on promoting an inclusive culture and fostering equal opportunities within the legal parameters.”

Mr. Wheless also notes that recruiting and attracting the best candidates is a shared responsibility between search firms, search committees, and the institutional community. “It is important to implement inclusive search processes that mitigate unconscious biases and provide fair consideration

to diverse candidates throughout the selection process,” he said. “While progress has been made, diversity and inclusion efforts should be viewed as an ongoing journey rather than a destination. Colleges and universities must continue partnering with stakeholders to further enhance their diversity and inclusion initiatives. Together, we can build leadership teams that reflect the diverse communities served by these institutions and create inclusive environments where all students and faculty can thrive.”

“Many universities are continuing to see a large amount of turnover in some senior leadership roles,” said Jane Griffith, managing partner and founder of **Griffith Group**. “We are seeing a new trend that seems to indicate that many individuals who took on new roles during COVID, a time of high stress and change management, or leaving those roles as we see more stability coming back into the sector. We are continuing to see a high demand for senior student leaders, who have an appreciation and capability to manage those complex portfolios. In Canada, we are also seeing the prioritization of indigenization, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (I-EDIA) across all campuses and with hiring committees. We continue to see in Canada that there is a greater focus and appreciation on recognizing barriers that have systematically excluded certain identities and ensuring anti-bias measures are integrated at every step of the process.”

No two universities are the same, and so the challenges from institution to institution will vary. “That being said, search competition is at its peak, given its height by global financial instability, increasing costs of globally, and major recruitment competition,” Ms. Griffith. “Additionally, and what some call ‘the Great Realignment,’ many professionals are prioritizing remote work given the shifting labor status quo in certain industries over the past few years.

Institutions of higher education will need leaders who can successfully navigate and steer through the complex and shifting terrain of higher ed, all the while prioritizing their institution's vision through strategic

leadership, collaborative partnerships, and just sense of purpose.”

Many of the senior academic positions are broad in scope and scale and Ms. Griffith is seeing that as a

SPOTLIGHT

The High Demand for Higher Education Leaders Continues

 With a new school year approaching, a number of top colleges and universities have announced they are seeking new, high profile leaders to take them into new eras of fundraising, digitalization, sports and, in some cases, globalization. Several universities haven't changed leaders in years or even decades, and their boards of trustees and search committees are finding an entirely new and highly competitive landscape as they set out. It is another reason why they're calling in executive recruiters to assist.

In recent interviews with **Hunt Scanlon Media**, a range of executive recruiters who focus on higher education agreed that the challenges facing the sector are significant. The higher education landscape is shifting across the world, and the next generation of university leaders require a unique set of skills to negotiate this change. The traditional university model is being challenged by growing student migration, disruptive technologies, and an increasingly competitive market-driven economy.

The role of the university president seems to change in response to cyclical economic crises. This was evident in 2008 with the housing market, and in 2000 in response to the dot-com bubble bursting, according to Barry Vines, managing director and senior member of **ZRG Partners'** higher education practice. "As the underlying economics of higher education shift, we will sometimes see that the fit of a particular president to her or his institution has changed in response," he said. "Sometimes that leads to a disconnect where there was previously a fit. Top academic institutions require the president to be very visible at fundraisers and events. Some institutions need the president to be engaged as a community leader off-campus as well as on."

The president's ultimate responsibility, however, continues to be the safety of the students, faculty, and staff. So how does a university president continue to manage the demand for her or his time? "The answer is in the fit," said Mr. Vines. "The reason for vetting the fit is to find out if this potential president can cover the institution's need for leadership. University presidents are people as well. They carry the burden of unhappy alumni, lack of funds, and failing programs. The current demand depends on the institution's need for leadership."

Community Colleges

Community colleges across the nation are losing a record number of presidents. Inside Higher Education recently reported that California Community College leaders say that the pandemic has exacerbated an already rampant leadership turnover in the system. Larry Galizio, president and CEO of the Community College League of California, says that at least 17 of the 137 California community college leaders have retired between January 2020 and March of this year. He noted that the

demands of the president's job and the emotional toll of the pandemic have led to burnout and prompted early retirements.

Under the current challenges faced by most of our nation's community colleges one of the most critical is the need to increase the community college student's completion rates. Joe May, chancellor emeritus of Dallas College, identified four key leadership strategies to address the need for more successful student completion rates. They are: Consider the community before the college, cultivate employer partnerships, eliminate significant barriers that require minor fixes, and give learners agency over their skills.

The Great Realignment

"I feel that we are not seeing the Great Resignation but the Great Realignment," said Jane Griffith, managing partner and founder of **Griffith Group**. "Candidates are questioning if their values align with their organization and if not, leaving those roles. That being said, I believe there should be a huge emphasis on succession planning but not all organizations are thinking that far out yet. A lot are still trying to recover from COVID."

"With school shutdowns and virtual learning playing out over the past two years, attendance and tuition decreased dramatically, and sports and other programs were placed on hold," said David Kant, president of Dynamic Search Consulting (DSC). "The entire education industry was devastated, quickly changing the operating basis for universities and colleges from times of growth and expansion to that of surviving and keeping their head above water in managing costs with a fraction of the revenue seen in prior years."

Cultivating the Higher Education Leadership Pipeline

Michael J.R. Wheless, co-founder, principal and consultant at **Anthem Executive**, said DEI roles are certainly hot. "However, we are seeing more openings than we have seen in quite some time for president and provost," he said. "Innovation and creativity roles are also in demand. In addition, we will see more data execs as the adoption of AI is pushed to new levels."

Now, perhaps more than any other time in history, the need for a high-performing university leadership is essential, according to Mr. Wheless. "Today's leaders need to have the vision to see around corners and the capacity to find creative ways to grow and support the academic mission. They need the ability to foresee, prevent and solve problems and seize opportunities – internally and externally. This means leaders must develop an astute understanding of their stakeholders' needs and motivations. They must work cross-functionally, make informed shared decisions, and adapt proactively – all while reliably producing results."

Source: Hunt Scanlon Media

response to the size of these portfolios, which have grown to maintain the commitment, and interest, of senior leaders. “As a result, the next cohort of leaders are inside unit specific roles, which disadvantages many in a competitive search as they do not hold knowledge or experience across the breadth of portfolio,” she said. “We are also seeing many search committees manage risk mitigation with hires, which means opting for candidates who have succeeded in similar roles in the past. However, we do see that universities are promoting internal talent into more senior roles, and supporting them as they grow into those large portfolios. Their internal status removes some of the risk, as they know the institution, its culture, and their values align.”

More Work to be Done

Though there is still much work to be done to improve diversity in the higher education sector, Ms. Griffith has seen it moving in the right direction in Canada. “I-EDIA are at, or near, the top of every search conversation,” she said. “There is far more dialogue in early stages of the process to ensure opportunities are advertised in a way that would attract a diverse pool of talent. Furthermore, we are seeing an increase in reflective thought as committees consider candidates at various stages of the process, to ensure unconscious and implicit bias is minimized and all candidates are given equitable opportunity for consideration.”

“I have been seeing an emphasis on DEI both in candidate pools and in candidates’ experience advancing the principles of DEI,” said Gordon Lobay, regional managing partner, Americas at **Perrett Laver**. “This naturally looks different for every institution and universities are grappling with what diversity, equity, and inclusion really mean for them and their unique situation. I have also seen reduced government funding everywhere leading

to a desire for leaders with U.S.-style approaches to advancement and philanthropy. Candidates who have demonstrated success as fundraisers, or with experience in innovative approaches to revenue diversification, are highly sought after.

“Senior administrators are facing many trends impacting senior hiring in academia including, a more intense focus on DEI, anti-racism and indigenization,” said Erik Jackson, managing partner U.S. at Perrett Laver. “Further to these are debates and challenges surrounding academic freedom, freedom of speech, and the place of universities within society to protect the necessary freedoms essential to a democracy. While COVID-19 restrictions have eased in most jurisdictions, the influence of the pandemic is still there particularly in the fatigue apparent in potential candidates. Other recent factors include energy prices, global food insecurity, rises in inflation and interest rates, war and destabilized global geopolitics. Replacing the pandemic, these global challenges are influencing candidates’ decisions in making potential moves.”

“Today’s higher education president is individually held up more and more as the personification of the values and ideals of the institution – and this in the face of unpredictable, rapidly changing, and often threatening challenges from all possible angles and perspectives on all manner of issues and interests,” said Dr. Lobay. “Trust in public institutions cannot be assumed, and the president of any university will be tested repeatedly for the values they espouse and their shaping of the tone, message and values of the university. Senior leaders must also be effective in working with collaborators from industry, government, Indigenous communities, and the civil/social sector. Universities can no longer operate in isolation and funders are seeking to invest in ‘multi-partner’ platforms that are larger than any one institution,

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yielding social, academic, and economic dividends. The emergence of digital innovations within global higher education are also starting to ‘disrupt’ models for education and research within universities. The pace of change is fast and many institutions feel behind the curve.”

Higher education institutions are discussing DEI regularly in media, internally, and in search committees, according to Mr. Jackson. “The issue is more salient than ever before which is a great thing for the sector,” he said. “There is an increased emphasis on equity in search processes – committees taking issues like accessibility much more serious. Despite this, we still continue to see conservatism in making diverse appointments at the many senior levels. Diversity within recruitment panels, unconscious bias training, and the traditional job interview format becoming less of a focus have all benefited addressing diversity in recruitment. Our approach is one of creativity and persistence – using the networks that we have but also going out and finding people that you don’t know otherwise will help deliver on diversity.”

We are in a highly competitive talent market right now, and colleges and universities are beginning to recognize that to recruit top talent they need to be more flexible in how they structure executive level and senior leader positions, according to Susanne Griffin, VP and managing director at Greenwood Asher & Associates. “For example, they may need to be more creative with titles, compensation packages, hybrid work options, health and wellness perks, and consulting flexibilities. When attempting to attract talent, colleges and universities must recognize that the strength of the leadership team and internal culture matters. Candidates have employment options, and they will do their homework to determine if the institution’s current context will set them up for success.”

INSIGHT

The Emergence of the Chief Diversity Officer Role in Higher Education



Colleges and universities are increasingly looking to CDOs to help oversee their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) efforts. We look at the backgrounds and competencies they are seeking in CDOs, how they are structuring the role, and what it takes to make a CDO successful.

Chief diversity officers have become increasingly common across leading institutions of higher education, driven by the push to create more diverse, inclusive, and equitable environments for the benefit of all members of the community. While much has been written on the evolution of the mandate and remit of this role, relatively little data exist to identify the common profiles and reporting structures into which these roles fit.

Our findings indicate that, while specific needs and priorities will vary by institution, several broad conclusions can be drawn about the effective CDO.

Key Competencies of the Chief Diversity Officer

The effective higher education CDO is set up for success when they are empowered within the organizational structure by reporting to either the president or provost, have a clearly articulated mandate with agreed-upon metrics for success that recognize both the tangible and intangible impacts of the

function, and are supported by an institution that views diversity as a resource to be leveraged rather than a compliance exercise

In addition to foundational competencies such as setting strategy, execution for results, leading teams and building relationships, best-in-class CDOs are defined by a track record and expertise in Strategic leadership and change management, Persuasion and influence, Data-savvy storytelling, External engagement, Personal motivation and resilience, and Domain expertise and understanding of higher education culture.

Historically, diversity professionals often came to the role from either an HR or other compliance-focused background, indicative of the narrow scope usually afforded to the function. As the mandate and complexity of the role have expanded, so too has the range of profiles that have become relevant.

Among those reporting to the CDO, there is significant variability in team size. The median number of direct reports to the CDO in our sample was three, with public institutions having a higher median of six and private institutions having a median of two. This variability by institution type makes sense given that public institutions tend to be much larger and therefore their DE&I teams need to serve a larger number of students, faculty, and other stakeholders.

Source: Russell Reynolds Associates

“Because of the highly competitive talent landscape, we are being asked to support searches for positions that were often handled by the institution in the past,” Ms. Griffin said. “More and more, we are being contacted to assist with filling director, chair, and faculty roles, particularly in contexts where there may be additional circumstances that make recruiting challenging. When budgets are tight, finding resources to support expanded use of search firms can be a difficult decision. However, most colleges and universities recognize that, in the long run, finding quality talent is worth every penny spent.”

“A major issue for state systems – especially where demographic forces are resulting in declining enrollment and associated tuition revenue in rural areas – is how to maintain some access to higher education in those locations with fewer resources,”

said Jim Johnsen, VP of executive search at **Greenwood Asher**. “In response, schools are seeking leaders who have a stomach for making decisions that involve tradeoffs between competing public good where some in the community might experience loss in the pursuit of what others see as a sustainable path forward.”

“Higher education, including searches for senior leaders, is being impacted by political intervention well beyond what has been the norm,” said Robert Caret, VP for executive search at Greenwood Asher. We need leaders who can champion the important role that higher education plays in our society while, at the same time, have the political acumen and internal strength to deal with the challenges and opportunities presented by this complex environment.”

Despite their commitment and effort, our clients are still working to achieve the goals they established related to diversity and inclusion, according to Ms. Griffin. “They are recognizing that diversifying the workforce, specifically the leadership team, is necessary but not sufficient in creating a diverse and inclusive campus,” she said. “The national conversation regarding DEI has underlined the complex nature of these efforts. Moving forward, many of our clients are re-evaluating their efforts and determining whether they continue on their current path, alter their path, or seek a new path altogether to make the changes necessary to yield meaningful results.”

“Like most efforts at changing human behavior, the results are mixed and will take time to sort out,” Dr. Johnsen said. “Yes, pools are increasingly diverse, but hiring committees still tend to select candidates who are like them. So, if the selection committee reflects diversity (in racial, gender, or ideological terms), there is a better chance the candidate pool and the ultimate selection will too.”

With the release of ACE’s *2023 American College President Study*, which reports on the trends of the higher education presidency, AGB Search can see evidence of increasing turnover in higher education leadership. In executive search, there has been a shift in the expectations of presidential searches and timelines. Respondents to the survey indicated that they had been in office for 5.9 years; that number has fallen steadily according to each of the last three surveys, down from 6.5 years in 2016, seven years in 2011 and 8.5 years in 2006. Responses also show that presidents are leaving their positions for a multitude of reasons including crisis fatigue and strife with governing boards. “Regardless of circumstances, the news of the departure of a president sets the search timeline in motion,” said

Rod McDavis, managing principal at **AGB**. He notes the expectations of the timeline have shifted from historical norms. “Searches traditionally used to begin at the start or end of an academic year,” said Dr. McDavis. “Yet given the varying circumstances of departures now, searches are starting at varying times throughout the year. Similarly, the duration of many searches has been compressed, and some institutions ask that appointees start their roles immediately as opposed to coinciding with the start of the academic year.”

“Financial sustainability is a pressing concern, requiring leaders who can develop innovative revenue streams, optimize resource allocation, and ensure long-term viability.”

“Institutions today are searching for leaders who have expertise in multiple areas,” Dr. McDavis said. “A new president’s job has never been more complex, considering today’s challenges including declining enrollment, escalating costs, cybersecurity threats, and the ongoing need to defend the value of higher education. Ideally, an institution would select a leader who has experience with a wide array of the institution’s activities, with a focus on both financial sustainability and student success. A leader who can maintain a positive, collaborative relationship with their board of trustees through the principles of shared governance is poised for even greater success.”

AGB has seen the overall age of higher education presidents averaging about 60 years, according to the ACE President survey, with many candidates taking their first steps on the pathway to the presidency between the ages 40 and 50. “Beyond age, however,

there are several notable factors that should be emphasized when considering the experience of incoming presidents,” said Dr. McDavis. “One is the difference in time from aspiration to appointment between men and women, including men and women of color: on average, the time between aspiration and appointment is significantly shorter for women and women of color, with these two groups aspiring, applying to, and achieving their appointments presidencies within one and a half years of applying 5.9 years. For men and men of color, that time horizon is about two years 7.4 and 8.9 years, respectively.”

“On the other hand, women and women of color, in particular, were more likely to feel unprepared or provided with an unrealistic assessment for the expectations of the office to which they were appointed and/or the institution’s current challenges,” he said. “The disparity between these responses, from ambition to preparedness, should prompt discussion of the information that is shared during the search process with all candidates who advance in the search.”

In recent years, the one constant within higher education has been the rapid change to the industry, whether from societal or technological, and so finding a strong leader is key, according to Ruben Moreno, HR Practice lead for **Blue Rock Search**. “The strongest leaders are the ones who are comfortable learning, growing, and embracing the possibilities of the future,” he said. “Leaders need to not only be willing to embrace change, but they need to be excited to innovate and lead change. A related quality, of course, is resilience. With so much happening and so many rapid shifts all at once, higher education leaders need to be flexible and resilient to roll with what comes and steer a steady course.”

While a leader must be able to navigate change, they must also be able to enact it by prioritizing DEI

Mr. Moreno emphasized. “Diversity – or, to be more specific, the whole umbrella of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging – is very much a priority when it comes to hiring for leadership roles in higher education and beyond,” he said. “Prioritizing DEI efforts is one of the key attributes schools look for in leaders. It’s crucial to have the right leaders in place who will ensure that these DEI initiatives are authentic, meaningful, and address real issues, rather than simply paying lip service to social movements. It’s not just about public perception. DEI has a real correlation with positive business outcomes, and that holds true for higher education, too. Right now, schools are looking for leaders who have a vision for transforming institutional culture to one of inclusion, belonging, and ongoing learning and improvement for a more just society.”

Looking Inward For The Right Leader

While these attributes are all important, there’s not one solution for finding the right educational leader Mr. Moreno explained. “Every higher education institution is at different place in this journey, and that means that every school will need leaders with different expertise and priorities,” he said. “Schools are taking the time to reflect on where they are now, evaluate where they want (or need) to go in the near future, and working towards creating a board that reflects those goals and priorities. Having a wholistic approach to leadership is key in finding the right leader. Schools are looking for leaders who are willing to disrupt the status quo and understand that the “learning” part of their mission can’t just be about the students in the classroom.”

Not only is there significant change to the industry, but to the employees who make it up Mr. Moreno expressed. “The retiring Baby Boomer demographic and the bulk of the Great Resignation demographic overlaps, but is not identical,” he said. “That makes

IN THE NEWS

DHR Global Recruits Head Baseball Coach for Northwestern University



Talent advisory firm **DHR Global** recently assisted in the recruitment of Ben Greenspan as Northwestern University's new head baseball coach. DHR's managing partner and global sports practice leader Glenn Sugiyama led the assignment. "After an extensive nationwide search, Ben's experience and coaching prowess quickly set him apart within the candidate pool," said Derrick Gragg, vice president for athletics and recreation at Northwestern. "At each of his stops, he has consistently showcased his ability to develop both players and programs. With a proven track record of recruiting top talent and fostering growth, we're confident Ben will lead our baseball program to new heights."

Mr. Greenspan joins the Wildcats after most recently serving as the associate head coach and recruiting coordinator for the University of Michigan during the 2023 season. Before that, he was an assistant coach at California Polytechnic State University in 2022. Mr. Greenspan has also spent seven seasons (2015-21) as an assistant at Arizona State University, and six seasons (2009-14) on the coaching staff at Indiana University. Previously named one of NCAA baseball's top assistant coaches to watch by D1 Baseball, Mr. Greenspan has played a key role in the recruiting and development of top prospects and MLB stars at each stop in his coaching career.

"I am honored and humbled to be selected as the next head baseball coach at Northwestern," said Mr. Greenspan. "My personal and professional beliefs align with the mission and values of Northwestern University, where academically oriented student-athletes strive for excellence on the field and in the classroom. My playing and coaching experience in the Big Ten has provided me with a knowledge of the fierce competition and excellence of the conference. This is a challenge that I welcome."

"Ben is an excellent choice to lead the Northwestern baseball program," said John Savage, head coach at UCLA. "He is an experienced, motivated, competitive, trustworthy coach that will be great for any player who has interest in joining the university. He

has seen the entire country regarding player evaluation and will lead Northwestern baseball with championship excellence."

"The Greenspan family will be the perfect fit for the Northwestern baseball program," said Kyle Schwarber, current Philadelphia Phillies outfielder and former player at Indiana. "Beb Greenspan's knowledge of the game, what it takes to win in the Big Ten/national stage, and how to get the best performance out of his players are things that he will bring to Northwestern baseball. He will bring a team together and mold them into men for the next step in a baseball career and post-baseball. The impact he had on my career and others at Indiana was massive, and the lessons learned are things that I carry still to this day."

In 2021, it was Mr. Sugiyama who assisted in the recruitment of Mr. Gragg into his current role as vice president for athletics and recreation. "It was essential for us to find the right leader for the next chapter at Northwestern — someone who can build both academic and athletic excellence at a time of rapid change in the intercollegiate sports landscape, and also someone who can create the best possible environment for students, staff and coaches," Mike Polisky, Northwestern's deputy athletic director for external affairs, said at the time of the search. "After talking extensively with Derrick, it was clear that he was the ideal person for the job."

Recruiting Sports Leaders

Since 1989, DHR Global has been a leading, privately held provider of executive search solutions with more than 50 wholly owned offices spanning the globe. The firm's consultants specialize in all industries and functions, providing senior-level executive search, management assessment, and succession planning services.

DHR's sports practice is a global specialty for the firm with capabilities on six continents across all sports-related organizations. These range from Fortune 500 companies and professional sports teams to public and private university athletics. The firm has overseen searches for the University of Pittsburgh, Colorado State University, Kansas, Syracuse, and Quinnipiac University, among others.

two separate sources of talent exiting their jobs at once, and two separate challenges with which to deal. There is room for new talent within higher education. (moved he said above) To combat this, it's not so much about replacing the talent that has left as it is about bringing in new talent to meet new needs and ensuring that they can thrive (and, in turn, help the institution thrive)."

"With so many institutions facing complex challenges and transitions, boards and campus leaders are facing increasing pressure to recruit transformational leaders, and to do so quickly while also being inclusive and thorough," said Dr. Jim Sirianni, co-practice leader and managing director, education, **Diversified Search Group**. "Boards are concerned that lengthy or poorly-timed searches will leave the

institution without permanent leadership for a year or more, resulting in a lack of momentum for key initiatives and fundraising. Long and complicated searches can also turn off candidates who may opt out of processes that are overly burdensome. At the same time, campus stakeholders may not trust a fast search and will seek more opportunities for input and role in the process. Balancing these competing goals is crucial for a successful, inclusive, and rigorous search.”

“While some states have implemented restrictions on DEI initiatives, colleges and universities can focus on promoting an inclusive culture and fostering equal opportunities within the legal parameters.”

In today’s rapidly evolving landscape, colleges and universities are grappling with a complex set of challenges,” said Susan VanGilder, co-practice leader and managing director, education, Diversified Search Group. “These issues stem from the intersection of changing demographics, increased societal expectations, economic pressures, and shifting pedagogical goals. Some of the prominent issues facing colleges today include: Financial sustainability; changing pedagogical models; diversity, equity, and inclusion; student mental health and well-being; and strategic enrollment management.”

“In seeking leaders to address these multifaceted challenges, colleges and universities are looking for individuals who exhibit a combination of strategic planning, emotional intelligence, adaptive leadership, and a commitment to fostering collaboration,” said Ms. VanGilder. “They seek individuals who can

inspire and empower diverse teams, communicate effectively with various stakeholders, including critics, and demonstrate a deep passion for education and its transformative power. Effective leaders in higher education today must be comfortable with managing risk without avoiding it at each turn, engaging the public, and driving their institutions toward a more innovative, inclusive, and sustainable future.”

The American Council on Education’s study of college and university presidents has reported that the average age of presidents has hovered around 60 years of age, with little change since 2006. “With many search committees and boards focusing on demonstrated experience as the best preparation for these complex roles, it is not surprising that more seasoned administrators continue to be attractive candidates,” Dr. Sirianni said.

“Over the years, many colleges and universities have recognized the importance of diversity and inclusion in higher education and have made significant strides in this regard,” said Ms. VanGilder. “What constitutes a good job has changed at most institutions in the last several years as the public has become more educated about the historical origins of inequality and rethinks what is possible in the future. One measure of progress that comes to mind is the increased frequency and skill we’re seeing wherein search committee members ‘call in’ one another when they interpret a biased comment about a candidate during a committee discussion.”

“Turnover at the top has been brisk,” said Dr. Sirianni. “For the past couple of years, we have seen presidents who held on during the pandemic – extending their own retirement plans to guide their institutions through those challenges – stepping down. The average tenure of a president is around six years, a number that has trended downward over the past 15 years.”

IN THE NEWS

Manhattan College Names James J. Perrino as Vice President for Finance/Chief Financial Officer



Manhattan College has appointed James J. Perrino as vice president for finance/chief financial officer effective July 26, 2023. Perrino comes to the College from Adelphi University, where he has served as executive vice president of finance and operations since 2017. Previously, he was a partner at the firm of CohnReznick, where he managed their not-for-profit and education industry practice.

Earlier in his career, he was a founding partner of the Perrino Consulting Group, where he led a firm that specialized in not-for-profit and higher education organizations until its merger with CohnReznick in 2012. Previously, Perrino was senior vice president for finance administration at St. John's University in Queens, where he managed business affairs, facilities management, enrollment management and internal audit. He began his career at KPMG, where he worked for 22 years, ultimately becoming a partner in the consulting and audit departments.

"We are thrilled to welcome James Perrino to Manhattan College," said Milo Rivero '81, Ph.D., P.E., president. "He is a highly accomplished financial executive with a proven track record of success. His deep experience in higher education finance, as well as his strong leadership and strategic skills, will be invaluable as we continue to grow and evolve through these challenging times."

In his new role, Perrino will be responsible for the leadership and management of all aspects of the College's financial operations, including budgeting, accounting, investment practices, and auditing. He will also play a key role in the College's strategic planning process.

During his six years at Adelphi, he was responsible for setting the strategic direction and actively managed operations for finance, human resources, facilities, project management and information technology. Perrino's accomplishments included managing a \$220 million budget, achieving annual surpluses in fiscal years 2018-2021, and oversaw the completion of a \$60 million renovation of the campus university center.

"I am so excited to be joining the Manhattan College leadership team as its next vice president of finance," said Perrino "I look forward to meeting the community and leveraging my past experience to help the College have the necessary resources to achieve its mission and vision. I look forward to being part of the journey to position the College for continued success and growth."

Perrino is a graduate of Boston University, where he earned a bachelor of business administration with a concentration in accounting. He holds a CPA in both New York and New Jersey and was the 2021 honoree as Long Island Business News financial administrator of the year.

Source: RH Perry & Associates

"We're seeing more leadership transitions at the presidential level of colleges and universities," said Faith Montgomery, vice president and managing director at **Lindauer**. This is consistent with the American Council on Education's most recent American College President Report. The report found that more than half of presidents plan to step down from their current roles within the next five years – and yet fewer than 30 percent of institutions have a succession plan in place to guide them through a presidential search. "I advise institutions to be as proactive as possible, not only to lay the groundwork for a successful presidential search but to anticipate building a leadership team that can support the new president and execute their vision," she said. "Transitions are an opportunity to take a 360-degree view and find alignment across strategic priorities, roles, and responsibilities."

More Candidates from Diverse Backgrounds

More candidates from diverse lived experiences are pursuing and being hired for presidential positions at a range of institutions in higher education, according to Ms. Montgomery. "The higher turnover rates at the very top of colleges and universities are creating an opportunity for these institutions to think deeply about how they might find, attract, and retain qualified women and people of color for leadership positions," she said. "Building a diverse pool of candidates requires intentionality. It won't happen organically. When institutions turn to their traditional talent pipelines, they're more likely to appoint a leader who matches the profile of the people who have held the position in the past. Look at the career paths of today's presidents: a majority rise from faculty and academic positions, which has the effect of limiting

opportunities for diverse candidates. What might happen if more institutions opened their presidential searches to candidates who followed different career paths?”

“I also have to point out that recruiting diverse candidates for leadership positions is one thing; creating the conditions for them to succeed in their new role is another,” Ms. Montgomery said. This means dismantling systemic obstacles to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging at the board and executive levels. People of color are doing their due diligence to determine if an institution is ready to support their vision. They’re asking boards and search committees tough questions related to an institution’s commitment to DEIB. For example, they want to know about recruiting efforts for diversifying faculty and the student body, retention strategies for students of color, financial aid, and the general allocation of funds to create a climate of belonging for people of all backgrounds.”

“Identifying and recruiting highly qualified candidates for certain roles within educational institutions can be challenging,” said Jay Lemons became president of **Academic Search**. “While every search presents its unique set of difficulties, there are specific positions that tend to be tougher to fill than others. One area where institutions often encounter recruitment challenges is in the health professions, particularly in roles such as directors/deans of nursing or occupational therapy. These positions often require individuals who possess a blend of academic and professional expertise, leadership skills, and a commitment to advancing their respective fields of study. Additionally, to be qualified for these types of positions, the individuals need to have the ability to manage and collaborate with faculty, students, external stakeholders, and regulatory bodies. It is

our goal at Academic Search to build diverse, strong pools for all searches, even those that may be in a challenging field to fill.”

“During the past 15 years, higher education has done a better job of intentionally nurturing the next generation of leaders,” Dr. Lemons said. “Academic Search is very proud to be wholly owned by a mission-based non-profit organization, the American Academic Leadership Institute (AALI) whose mission is to help develop the next generation of leaders through a series of programmatic offerings. AALI also has a clear focus on opening the doors much wider for leaders who come from backgrounds that have been underrepresented in higher education in the past. Our partnership and synergy with AALI gives us a significant competitive advantage as we grow our network of strong, prepared candidates through these leadership programs.”

Dr. Lemons points out the differences of leading a university opposed to a non-profit or for-profit. “Not only are there many differences in leading in the social sector vs. the corporate sector, but there are also great differences within the social sector itself,” he said. “In higher education, the true measure of an organization is about impacting the public good through education and research. In the for-profit sector in particular, the focus can be very much driven by the financial bottom line. Colleges and universities typically have large and complex boards and one of the fundamental tenets is the practice of shared governance whereby authority is delegated from boards to presidents, but with significant responsibility also being vested in faculty to determine who will teach, what can be taught, how it is taught, and who will be admitted for study. Leadership is challenging in all sectors, but there is a complexity to leading in the higher education space that is not found in other sectors.”

INDUSTRY VIEWPOINT

VIEWPOINT

Hunt Scanlon keeps tabs on an ever-expanding executive search and talent management sector that far exceeds where the industry was just a decade ago. Today, Hunt Scanlon tracks some 17,000 executive search consultants at more than 4,000 recruiting firms in North America and another 4,500 overseas, spanning Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and everywhere else in between.

To round out our study this year, we invited Amy Sugin, managing director at Koya Partners, part of Diversified Search Group and TaJuan Wilson, managing director at Storbeck Search | Diversified Search Group, to bring us their market insights. This timely Viewpoint challenges peers to have difficult discussions that develop positive change.

So, if you're interested in hearing from the industry's most trusted and respected leadership advisory professionals, we encourage you to take the time to read this outstanding Viewpoint.

NAVIGATING THE TALENT BATTLEFIELD: WINNING THE RECRUITMENT GAME WHILE KEEPING DE&I FRONT AND CENTER

Diversified Search Group's Amy Sugin and TaJuan Wilson Examine Higher Education Institutions' Struggles with Hiring and Retaining a Diverse Workforce



Amy Sugin



TaJuan Wilson

Amy Sugin is a managing director at Koya Partners, part of Diversified Search Group. She has over two decades of higher education administration experience in enrollment management, program management, and international education. Ms. Sugin has led searches for Barnard College, Carnegie Mellon University, Fordham University, Rutgers, Yale, New York University, NYU Abu Dhabi, University of North Carolina, Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design, Northwestern University, Saint Joseph's University, Tufts University, and Princeton University, among others.

TaJuan Wilson is managing director at Storbeck Search | Diversified Search Group. He has devoted his career to empowering historically underrepresented populations. Mr. Wilson served as the inaugural associate vice president for inclusive excellence and chief diversity officer at Georgia Southern University. He is the former special assistant for external relations and associate vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion and chief diversity officer at the University of Iowa.

Two years out from “[The Great Resignation](#)” and higher education institutions continue to grapple with the challenges of hiring and retaining a strong administrative workforce. Indeed, according to the Chronicle/Huron survey of higher education institutions, [62 percent of hiring managers reported that hiring for staff and administrative positions had been more difficult in the first quarter of 2023 than it was in 2022](#), and the 2022 survey was [not exactly comforting](#). Further, these challenges do not seem likely to abate: in a broad survey of higher education employees in April by CUPA-HR, more than [half of staff respondents indicated that they were at least somewhat likely to seek new employment in the next year](#). And there is no guarantee that these individuals will seek new employment at other educational institutions; indeed, the draw of the higher education workplace has been diminishing, with other sectors offering higher pay, more flexible work arrangements, and competing opportunities to find meaning in work.

In today's hyper-competitive job market, attracting and retaining top talent is akin to engaging in a high-stakes battle. To remain competitive, institutions must adopt strategic approaches that not only attract the best candidates but also promote diversity, equity, and inclusion as a standard practice by weaving it into the very fabric of the organization and the recruitment process. To be competitive, institutions must avoid the pitfall of tokenism

by genuinely valuing diversity and inclusion, not just as a checkbox, but as an integral part of culture.

At every stage of the traditional higher education recruitment process, institutions have the opportunity to maximize their potential of attracting strong candidates while maximizing their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion on their campuses. In this article, we will explore the best ways to recruit candidates in a fiercely competitive job market while applying a DEI lens.

Create the Context

A compelling employer brand is a magnet for top talent. Share stories and testimonials from employees who represent diverse backgrounds to illustrate your commitment to DEI. Highlight any awards or recognition your institution has received for its inclusive practices. Invest in Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): ERGs provide a platform for employees with shared identities or interests to connect and contribute to the company's DEI efforts. Encourage their formation and support their initiatives, as they can help attract candidates who align with your inclusive values.

Launch the Search Deliberately

Job descriptions serve as your first impression to potential candidates. Ensure they are inclusive and free from biased language, using an online tool to check for [gender bias](#), a service that provides [insight into coded language](#), and/

or internal or [external inclusive language guides](#) that promote best practices. Emphasize skills and qualifications necessary for the role rather than rigid requirements that may deter qualified candidates. Highlight your commitment to diversity and inclusion within the company culture. Consider the accessibility of your website postings for individuals with disabilities, and use the government's website outlining Web Accessibility and Microsoft's article on [making word documents accessible](#) as resources. Promote [pay transparency](#) in every job advertisement, not only because it increasingly becoming the law in many states, but also because it seeks to narrow the salary gaps that have traditionally disadvantaged women and people of color. To stand out in a crowded field, companies must cast a wider net. Diversifying your recruitment channels can help reach a more diverse talent pool. Beyond traditional job boards, consider leveraging social media platforms, niche websites, and professional networks. Collaborating with organizations focused on underrepresented groups can also yield great results.

Interview Thoughtfully

The pivot to virtual interviewing adopted by many institutions by necessity during the pandemic is now embraced by many institutions as more efficient and cost-effective than traditional airport interviews. Whether your campus conducts search committee interviews online or in person, it's crucial to be thoughtful about providing an equitable experience for all candidates. Include diverse interview panels to showcase your commitment to DEI and provide a more holistic assessment of candidates. Involve committee members in developing standardized interview questions and scoring criteria to reduce unconscious bias. Educate your committee on questions that are illegal to ask in job interviews, including those related to Race, Color, or National Origin; Religion; Sex, Gender Identity, or Sexual Orientation; Pregnancy status; Disability; Age or Genetic Information; Citizenship; Marital Status or Number of Children; or Salary. Attend to technology – online or in person – in ways that will allow you to be fully engaged. Think about ways in which to set candidates up for success – provide questions to them in advance so that they can be thoughtful about their responses; type questions in the

chat to attend to different ways in which individuals process information best.

As executive recruiters we have cringed at some of what we have witnessed in search committee interviews – committee members slurping soup, answering phone calls, positioning their cameras so that only the tops of their heads are visible onscreen, coming late to interviews or leaving early. Search committees should in advance discuss their commitment to providing a welcoming, hospitable environment both for its own sake and also to attract candidates in demand.

Welcome Graciously

The campus visit is arguably the most labor intensive, and most critical, part of the recruiting process. As time and capacity demands on search committee chairs, hiring managers, and HR leaders increase, oftentimes there is not enough time or attention allocated to planning and executing a campus visit that will “seal the deal” with a candidate. We have seen this result in behavior and practices that sabotage the process – short turnaround times from invitation to campus visit; time management issues for candidates during campus visits on both ends of the spectrum, either with multiple meetings scheduled back-to-back without breaks or spread over multiple days, requiring candidates to be away from their jobs for the better part of a week.

We have seen candidates asked to develop and deliver presentations that require insider knowledge of the campus, or that are overly burdensome, time consuming and complex. We are cautious about the invisibility of some of the considerations that impact candidate experience. We've had candidates asked to participate in a grueling day of interviews during Ramadan, or while pregnant, without consideration of the extra taxation this entails. The commitment to inclusivity extends to campus visits – candidates should be asked about accessibility concerns, additional considerations that would help them feel more comfortable.

We have also seen great efforts by our clients in welcoming candidates to campus. Setting up a “pre-call” with the search committee chair or the hiring manager to walk candidates through their day and help answer initial

questions is a great way to lay down the red carpet. Where space permits, assigning an empty office to a candidate for use during downtime is a consideration they appreciate. Executive search consultants follow up with clients after their campus visits; outreach from the hiring manager or search committee member is a courtesy fewer campuses accord. Airport pickups and drop-offs, though time consuming, allow additional touchpoints for both candidates and institutional representatives. One client took a candidate's dancer daughter to the local dancing school for a drop-in class. Attending to partner and family needs communicates a concern for the totality of the candidate's life, demonstrating inclusivity in action.

Move Expeditiously

In this market it is crucial to make decisions and communicate them carefully and as quickly as possible. Delaying hiring decisions creates more space for competitive offers and communicates ambiguity that may or may not be there. Consider onerous background and reference check procedures to see how they may be mitigated. Communicate openly about when decisions will be made and shared, and make every effort to do so as soon as possible after the campus visit ends.

Our Final Thoughts

The journey of identifying and appointing transformational leadership for your campus in a competitive candidate market requires purpose and precision, leaving every candidate feeling respected and valued. In a time where higher education faculty, administrators and staff are more overburdened and time-challenged than ever, it is easy to default to shortcuts. However, meaningful and intentional planning and execution in the recruitment process, though more labor intensive at the outset, can lead institutions to win the competitive candidate market game while simultaneously furthering commitments and ideals of diversity, equity inclusion. This unlocks the potential for enduring impact, growth, and the future of the higher education workforce.

We believe that in the realm of education, where every decision has a profound impact on the lives of students, nothing can be left to chance. For that reason, DEI must be woven into the very fabric of the organization. We know that when this work is prioritized, every member of the learning environment benefits. The importance of these practices extends far beyond the recruitment process; it resonates with the very essence of higher education's mission. In this dedication to excellence, we find not only better outcomes that lead to institutional growth but also the assurance of a brighter tomorrow for all those who seek knowledge and inspiration within the hallowed halls of academia.