

THE STUDENT SENATE OF OBERLIN COLLEGE

MARCH 14, 2007

To Chair Robert Lemle, Vice Chair Victor Hymes, and the Presidential Search Committee

We are heartened to see the Presidential Search Committee's progress, as transmitted by Mr. Lemle on March 8. The Search Profile you issued wisely recognizes "A new understanding and more widespread agreement about open and effective processes of shared governance and the roles of each constituent group will support the realization of Oberlin's long-term goals." In that spirit of Oberlin's esteem for an open and inclusive process, we ask the committee for clarifications and answers to questions raised by your fifth progress report.

When discussing the important balance between maintaining the confidentiality of applicants with the need for campus involvement, the committee offers several scenarios for how the campus may be involved. The wording of these scenarios suggest the possibility that only a single final candidate may be brought on campus instead of a few contenders. Does the committee plan on bringing the top candidates or just the final candidate to campus for our input?

The progress report suggests there will be a heavy reliance on representatives of various constituencies for feedback instead of open opportunities for all members of the Oberlin community to share their input and reactions to the top candidates. How will the committee ensure that all interested students will have an opportunity to engage and evaluate the top candidates? How will the final selection incorporate student input?

We are concerned by the apparent limits imposed upon student participation in the search. Given the committee's sensitive situation, happily created by the strong qualifications of applicants, has the committee considered increasing its size to allow for more student involvement? Has the committee considered that a strong student presence on the committee may help convince candidates that they want to serve as Oberlin's president?

Can you clarify whether the Code of Conduct allows for members of the committee to meet with groups on campus to hear feedback and input so long as they do not share any confidential or privileged information?

The Oberlin Student Bill of Rights insists "Students, as well as faculty, staff, and all other officers of the College, must play a major role in campus governance if the College is to thrive as a community of scholars." With this in mind, the Student Senate believes that students must be guaranteed a greater role in the search process. The students of Oberlin are eager to work with the committee and the Board of Trustees to select a qualified and exciting new president. We want to help Oberlin continue on its path toward becoming a thriving community of scholars.

Thank you for continuing to provide the Oberlin Community with updates on your progress—we appreciate the opportunity to raise questions and concerns. Student Senate wishes the committee all the best in reviewing applications. We look forward to continuing our dialogue and collaboration on Oberlin's presidential search with both the Search Committee and the Board of Trustees.

Sincerely,

COLIN KOFFEL, *Liaison*
BEN KLEBANOFF, *Governance Chair*

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