



TO: Members of the College of Electors

SPONSOR: Françoise Ko, Chair of the College of Electors

DATE: November 11, 2009 for November 26, 2009

AGENDA ITEM: 6

ITEM IDENTIFICATION: Proposal for the Establishment of an Interview Committee

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The College of Electors is charged with the mandate of electing the alumni members of the Governing Council. The general process to be followed in such an election is outlined in the Constitution of the College of Electors (Section VI. B. 1-6, page 5; March 25, 2008).

BACKGROUND:

Since its establishment by the Governing Council in 1972, it has been the College’s practice to invite short-listed candidates for alumni members of the Council to meet with the full College for an interview. In recent years, in an effort for increased transparency, this requirement has been advertised at multiple stages, beginning with the distribution of the application form at the beginning of January through to immediately before the candidate enters the room. Despite the many steps that are taken to prepare candidates for an interview with approximately forty-five members in the formal setting of the Simcoe Hall Council Chamber, it appears that individuals often find the interview experience uncomfortable and are left with a sense that the process lacks confidentiality. For many years, the majority of candidates (both successful and unsuccessful) have stated that the College’s interview process is unsatisfying, and that they would not voluntarily expose themselves to such an experience again.

In December, 2004, a Special Committee to Review the Election Process for Alumni Governors and the Chancellor submitted its Report to the College. Included in the Report were recommendations to enhance the existing practice and to strengthen the selection process of alumni governors. The Committee also recommended “...that the College, through its Executive Committee and with the assistance of the Office of the Governing Council, continue to revisit its interview plan annually and ensure that it focuses on requirements needed and candidates’ ability to meet those requirements. Each interview should to some degree be individualized to address specific elements of each candidate’s profile as determined by the needs assessment and needs analysis.” (Report of the Special Committee to Review the Election Process for Alumni Governors and the Chancellor, page 3.)

An initiative approved by the College on November 19, 2008 to review the existing interview process led to the development of a proposal for a revised process by the Executive Committee. The recommendation to revise the interview process used as part of the evaluation of candidates for alumni members of the Governing Council was discussed by the College at meetings on March 25 and September 24, 2009, and to date, input on the proposal has been provided by approximately half of the members of the College.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Based on the feedback submitted by members and following a full discussion of the matter by the Executive Committee, I would like to recommend that a subset of the College serve as an Interview Committee for candidates for alumni members of the Governing Council. The College's Constitution provides for such an approach and notes that:

“Candidates may be invited to appear before the College, or a group of members of the College, for personal interviews, as the College determines. The interviews will be held *in camera* and discussed only with members of the College.” (Section VI B. 1, page 5)

The proposed process is analogous to that leading to the appointment of the Chancellor by the College¹ and to the appointment of the President and other senior administrators by the Governing Council. In all cases, a smaller group screens and interviews the candidates and reports back to the larger governance body.

It is my belief that an Interview Committee would be better able to engage in more effective conversation with candidates, and there would be a fuller exchange of information among those present. Discussion of the role of the alumni member and the ways in which candidates might contribute to the Governing Council could occur in greater depth. A more intimate setting with fewer people would be more conducive to frank dialogue, and the candidate would likely have a stronger perception of having participated in a confidential discussion. While the purpose of the interview is to gather information that will assist the College in electing the best alumni members, a positive and respectful experience for the candidates is also a desirable outcome, given the University's goal of drawing on the talents of committed alumni.

One of the previous recommendations that I had made to the College included the use of a live video feed that would allow members of the College to observe the interview being conducted by the Interview Committee in a separate room. On reflection, I have realized that such an option would not address the inadequacies of the current practice, nor improve the interview process from the vantage point of candidates. On the contrary, it would likely cause the candidates further discomfort since they would not be able to directly see their interviewers.

If the principle for a subset of the College to serve as an Interview Committee is accepted, guidelines for the Committee could then be developed and considered for approval by the College. The guidelines would outline the preferred interview procedures to be followed by the Committee.

Through this proposed refinement, the College would continue to contribute strongly to the evaluation process, and it would retain the final decision with respect to the election of alumni members of Governing Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

Be it Resolved

THAT authority to conduct interviews of candidates for alumni members of Governing Council be delegated to an Interview Committee of the College of Electors, effective immediately.

I look forward to a full discussion of the College on this matter at our meeting on November 26, 2009. If you would like to contact me before then, please feel free to send an email to Mae-Yu Tan at maeyu.tan@utoronto.ca, who will forward it to me.

Thank you.

¹ The College's constitution was revised on February 10, 2005 to streamline the process for electing the Chancellor and expand the role of the Chancellor Search Committee.