



COLLEGE OF ELECTORS

TO: Members of the College of Electors

SPONSOR: Françoise Ko, Chair of the College of Electors

DATE: March 11, 2009 for March 25, 2009

RE: **Agenda Item 7 – Procedures for the Evaluation of Candidates for Alumni Governor**

I am writing on behalf of the Executive Committee of the College of Electors to propose a refinement to the alumni governor elections process, as outlined below.

Background and Jurisdictional Information: The general process to be followed in the election of the alumni members of the Governing Council is outlined in the Constitution of the College of Electors (Section VI. B. 1-6, page 5; March 25, 2008). It defines several parameters 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)

For a number of years our practice has been to invite short-listed candidates to the full College for interviews. In light of experience with and feedback from former candidates, as well as advice arising from consultations, your Executive Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to re-consider our approach. Three related themes have consistently emerged over time:

- highly-qualified individuals are often reluctant to put their names forward because they do not wish to participate in an interview with a body comprising 40 or more individuals. While the College has a record of electing solidly contributing governors, it has been a challenge to establish a consistently large and strong pool.
- unsuccessful candidates do not let their names stand in successive years and have indicated their decision rests in large part on having to appear again before such a large group.
- the brief interview and large-group setting do not allow sufficient time for nor encourage in-depth discussion with the candidates.

When the Executive Committee met on March 2, 2009, we considered whether our traditional approach would continue to serve our objectives. The current review of governance initiated by the Governing Council includes as one of its priorities an assessment of the identification, selection / election, orientation and education of governors. With this in mind, and focusing on good governance and search practices, we undertook our review of the ten nomination packages for alumni governor that were submitted by the February 23, 2009 deadline. The high number and calibre of the applicants is particularly gratifying, as the College has made a concerted effort to encourage highly qualified candidates to apply to serve as alumni governors. Through its work, the College has generated an impressive pool this year. However, this favorable change has also resulted in a greater challenge of selecting the most suitable individuals from among a group of outstanding candidates.

The College has frequently discussed the importance of a fair, respectful, and professional process in evaluating and electing candidates. We know that the existing process can result in a daunting experience for many candidates. These prospective volunteers are required to respond to interview questions in a formal setting in front of a large number of people. Such a process is not welcoming, and it does not allow for an in-depth discussion with the candidates. With a larger applicant pool, it is even more important to ensure that the interview and assessment processes are managed carefully and sensitively, so that candidates feel they have had the opportunity to present their perspectives and outline the contributions they expect to make. The candidates invest significant time and effort into the application process, and the process the College follows should a) demonstrate the College's interest in and appreciation of this effort and b) use the College's and candidates' time effectively.

At its meeting, the Committee discussed ways in which the evaluation of candidates for alumni governor might be refined, with the intention of asking the College to engage in further discussion at its meeting on March 25th. I am providing this document in advance of the meeting so that members have an opportunity to reflect on the proposal in preparation for a full discussion.

Refinement to the College of Electors' Interview Process:

The Executive Committee agreed that a revised approach could help to strengthen the process and improve candidates' experiences. The Committee suggests that the past practice of the College be refined to allow the Executive Committee, whose members are elected by the College, to conduct the interviews of the candidates rather than the entire College. This would be a reasonable function for the Committee to carry out, as it is already an established body of the College. However, the College could consider adding two co-opted members from the College to participate in the interviews with the Committee.

The ability to engage candidates in a smaller group setting would likely prove to be more effective than in an interview with forty-five people. Such a process would also allow the Committee to gather additional information from the candidate in a more meaningful way. As a result of this more limited interaction, unsuccessful candidates might be more willing to reapply to serve as alumni governor in future years. This will become particularly important as an increased pool of highly qualified candidates present themselves for a limited number of seats. Where a candidate may not be successful one year, their expertise may be particularly complementary to a given cohort in a different year and we will want to maintain a pool of willing candidates.

As I indicated above, the College's Constitution (Section VI B. 1, page 5) provides for such an approach, were the proposal to be approved. This proposed process is analogous to the appointment of the Chancellor by the College and to the appointment of the President by the Governing Council. In both cases, a smaller group screens and interviews the candidates, subsequently making a recommendation to the larger governance body for approval. In our case, though, we are proposing that the College continue to have key responsibility for the initial screening and establishment of a short list.

The proposed evaluation could include the following steps:

- The College would participate in the development of a short list of perhaps four candidates to be invited to attend an interview with the Executive Committee.
- The College would approve the set interview questions to be used.
- The Executive Committee would conduct interviews of the most suitable individuals.
- The Committee would then select those whom they would recommend to the College for election as alumni governors. (For 2009, two candidates would be selected to fill the seats that would be vacated as of July 1, 2009.)

- Following the interviews, the Executive Committee would report back to the College at its final meeting of the year, outlining the reasons for their recommendation of the top candidates.
- A vote by secret ballot on the Committee's recommendation would then be held by the College.

Through this proposed refinement, the College would continue to contribute strongly to the evaluation process and reserve the final decision with respect to the election of alumni governors.

The Committee looks forward to a full discussion of the College on this matter on March 25th.

Recommendation:

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I recommend that the College of Electors approve:

THAT authority to conduct interviews of candidates for alumni governor be delegated to the Executive Committee of the College of Electors, effective immediately.