
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

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Author: Low
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Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez
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Subject: California State University: appointment of campus presidents

SUMMARY

This bill prohibits the Trustees of the California State University (CSU) from appointing a president of a campus unless that person has participated in at least one public forum on that campus after being formally and publicly designated by the trustees as a finalist for an appointment as president of that campus.

BACKGROUND

Existing law establishes the CSU, under the administration of the Trustees of the CSU, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in this state. The CSU comprises 23 institutions of higher education, each of which is headed by a president who is appointed by the trustees. (Education Code § 66600)

ANALYSIS

This bill prohibits the Trustees of the CSU from appointing a president of a campus unless that person has participated in at least one public forum on that campus after being formally and publicly designated by the trustees as a finalist for an appointment as president of that campus.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Rationale for the bill.*** This bill emerges out of a concern regarding the process for appointment of a CSU campus president. Prior to 2011, the CSU required campus visits that included an open forum with candidate(s). The slate of final candidates who visit the campus were required to be announced in advance of their visits. This policy changed in 2011. Campus visits are now an optional component of the search process.

According to the California Faculty Association, all but a few CSU campus academic senates have adopted resolutions in favor of reinstating campus visits within the hiring process. The author asserts, "the CSU is the largest public university system in the country, and there is an urgent need for a more transparent selection process. Requiring finalist to participate in a public campus based forum will allow for the involvement and participation of the CSU community, which includes students, parents, faculty and staff."

This bill requires CSU to hold at least one public forum before the final appointment as president of a campus is made.

2) **Current policy.** The current *Policy for the Selection of Presidents* was adopted by the Trustees in September of 2011. When there is an impending vacancy on a campus, California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees policy directs the chair of the board to appoint a Trustee Committee for the selection of the President comprised of the board's chair, four trustees and the chancellor. A second committee is also empaneled, the Advisory Committee to the Trustees committee, to provide advice and consultation. The Advisory Committee is comprised of campus representatives, including:

- The chair of the campus Academic Senate;
- Two additional faculty representatives, selected by the campus faculty;
- A member of the campus support staff, selected by the staff;
- A student , selected by the constituted representatives of the student body;
- A member of the campus Advisory Board, selected by that board;
- An alumni of the campus, selected by the campus Alumni Association;
- A vice president or academic dean from the campus;
- The president of another CSU campus; and,
- Two additional members from constituent groups can be appointed by either the chair of the board or the chancellor to ensure diversity of the campus and/or service area is thoroughly considered during the search.

At the front end of the selection process this Advisory Committee and the Board of Trustees committee host an open forum with the campus community at the campus to gain input on the needs of the campus, and the desired attributes of the new President. These committees determine the final list of candidates to be advanced to the Board of Trustees. The chancellor and chair of the Trustees Committee determine whether to schedule a campus visit, which is optional. The process is confidential until a finalist for the position is announced.

3) **Appointments made in the last three years.** According to CSU, "beyond the campus itself, the two biggest criteria that come into play when developing a final pool of candidates is the ability to go through the process confidentially and executive compensation." According to the CSU, candidate pools have greatly increased since CSU's presidential selection process was modified in 2011 to make a campus visit for semi-finalists optional. Fourteen campus presidents have been appointed under the new policy in the last three years. Among the

campus presidents selected in 2016, all five are women, which bring the total number of women presidents to 11 of the 23 campuses.

- 4) **Things to consider.** The CSU notes that the appointments made since the implementation of the new policy have resulted in the most diverse cohort of campus presidents in any system nationally. CSU believes eliminating the confidentiality that is afforded candidates under the new policy would adversely impact the applicant pool and that CSU would lose the opportunity to attract the best candidates both nationally and internally. This raises several concerns for the committee.

- a) Under current law, the Trustees of the California State University are afforded the powers, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration the system.

Should the Legislature insert itself in a university hiring process that appears to be yielding both gender and ethnic diversity in campus leadership?

- b) Under the current policy the selection committees host an open forum on campus to solicit input on the needs of the campus, and the desired attributes of the new President. These public forums are publicly noticed, LiveStreamed, web archived, publicly available and are provided to the candidates and to the full Board of Trustees. An additional channel of public input via a confidential email address is provided to the campus community for those who were unable to attend the public forum. Additionally the Advisory Committee to the Trustees committee is comprised of students, faculty, staff and alumni. The current policy provides that any member of this committee can object to advancing a candidate as finalist.

It appears that the current process affords ample opportunity for the involvement and participation of the CSU community. How much more transparency is necessary?

- c) According to the CSU, policy changes in 2011 were in part a response to calls from the Legislature to address executive compensation issues by expanding opportunities to hire internal to the state and system.

While proponents argue for more transparency, what level of transparency is appropriate for a presidential search? What is the trade-off between transparency and affording qualified individuals from within the CSU system to maintain professional discretion? How would requiring a candidate to participate in a public forum before a final appointment is made limit the applicant pool? Would this discourage qualified individuals from within the CSU system from applying?

SUPPORT

California Faculty Association
California Labor Federation
California State University Employees Union

OPPOSITION

California State Student Association
California State University

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