



# Fitchburg State University President

**PRESENTED NOVEMBER 7, 2023 BY:**

**Kim M. Morrisson, Ph.D., Managing Director**  
**Euris E. Belle, Managing Director**

Ms. Jessica Murdoch  
Vice President, Human Resources & Payroll Services  
Fitchburg State University

Dear Jessica:

Thank you for inviting Diversified Search Group to submit our credentials to Fitchburg State University to assist in your search for a new President. Our mission is “Cultivating New Leadership for a Changing World.” We are honored to be considered again as your source for new leadership, and we appreciate this opportunity to provide additional details about who we are and how we work.

Kim M. Morrisson, Ph.D.  
Managing Director

Euris E. Belle  
Managing Director

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## The Challenge

Located on a beautiful campus in northern Massachusetts, Fitchburg State University was founded as a teachers college and has established itself as a liberal arts university with an emphasis on career-oriented learning. Founded in 1894, the University enrolls nearly 6,500 undergraduate and graduate students across an array of outstanding programs and inspires the pride of 48,000 living alumni around the world. With a low student-to-faculty ratio of 13:1, Fitchburg State students benefit from small class sizes and accessible faculty dedicated to teaching. With the search for its next President, the University seeks a leader of extraordinary ability, exceptional judgment, and care and thoughtfulness who will guide this historic and vital institution to a new level of educational impact, regional and national standing, and financial and operational strength.

Fitchburg State University is also embracing its challenges. The University's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan requires a President with the energy, skills of persuasion, and powers of advocacy to inspire significant new levels of philanthropy. It is imperative for the new President to build upon the Plan's six strategic goals, especially goal six: stewarding physical and financial resources responsibly and navigating a path to long-term organizational sustainability. Meanwhile, the growing complexities that higher education faces – including the present moment of economic uncertainty, public concern about the purpose of education, and the pace at which campus issues often now become national debates – place a premium on leadership that combines strategic management, long-term vision and a sense of urgency, and special abilities as a communicator.

Excited by this challenge, deeply invested in the mission of higher education, and with extensive experience serving public institutions, Diversified Search Group greatly appreciates the opportunity to describe how we can support the University in securing the leader ideally suited to the clear and compelling search mission that you have established. We are proud of our long-term partnership with the Fitchburg State University and for completing these past searches with you:

- ◆ President (2003)
- ◆ Chief Financial Officer (2002)
- ◆ Vice President, Academic Affairs (2004)

We would embrace with enthusiasm and pride the chance to build on the knowledge and relationships that we developed during these searches in helping the University secure its next President.

# Firm Overview

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## Cultivating New Leadership for a Changing World

Our deep relationships with our clients remind us daily of the value of exceptional leadership in institutions that are vitally important to our communities, our society, and the future. We believe in the transformative power of education and the nonprofit sectors.

## What Will We Bring to Your Search?

Our clients return to us again and again because their success is our priority. They know we will deliver:

- **Integrity** in representing the needs of our clients in a vigorous and diligent manner, while treating all candidates with dignity, fairness, and honesty;
- The **national reputation and connections** that open doors to candidates of outstanding ability and potential from all backgrounds;
- A search process that centers **equity, inclusion, and sustainability** on behalf of our clients and our candidates in recognition of important cultural, political, and historical contexts; and
- The **insight** and **logistical dexterity** that come from decades of search experience and hundreds of completed searches for universities, colleges, and university systems.

## Commitment to Equity and Inclusion

Our colleges, universities, schools, and nonprofit organizations are poised to solve some of our country's most challenging problems; we share our clients' belief that finding new leaders from groups that have historically been excluded is crucial to advancing society's educational needs and solving these problems from multiple perspectives and vantage points. At every stage of the search, we offer counsel on inclusive and equitable best practices, including building a representative search committee (if the search will use a committee), drafting comprehensive language in the position description and qualifications, proactively building a diverse (by all definitions) candidate pool, and guiding the committee through vetting (interviews and referencing) that focuses on demonstrated qualifications measured against clear criteria.

We work at every turn to foster environments of belonging and accountability and recognize the necessity of investing in this work within our own organization. Our entire staff undergoes training to

hone our ability to recognize implicit bias and the cognitive shortcuts to which decision-makers might be prone. Our [Vice President for Equity and Inclusive Excellence, Ralph Tavares, Jr.](#), provides expertise and guidance on best practices in this space and is a dedicated resource to internal teams and clients alike. We are proud to note our distinctive history as a woman-owned and woman-led firm, and we stand ready to help anticipate and identify issues related to equity and inclusiveness in the search process. While all key decisions are the responsibility of the search committee and the institution, we see our role as setting the procedures and tone for a fair, rigorous, and inclusive process.

Questions we frequently ask hiring teams and search committees include:

- What assumptions are we making about the candidate that may not be based on evidence?
- Are we focusing too much on pedigree of degrees or employers versus specific accomplishments or performance of the candidates?
- Have we created criteria that focus on experiences and characteristics that match the challenges and opportunities facing the institution?
- Are we able to distinguish between making decisions on experience versus potential?
- Are we creating a committee culture that allows each committee member to share safely their individual perspectives and insights?
- Are we signaling to all candidates (through position description, questions asked, sensitivity to personal considerations, etc.) the institution's commitments and values around equity and inclusion?

In every search we lead, we commit to working proactively and energetically to recruit an excellent and diverse pool of candidates. We are proud of our record of developing exceptional and diverse candidate pools and, as a result, bringing diversity to leadership. In **2022**, our Education Practice consultants completed more than **200** searches. Among our placements, **55 percent** identified as **women**, and **48 percent** identified as **persons of color**. To ensure we are reflecting the lived experience of our candidates, they may receive an optional demographic data survey allowing them to self-identify in the areas of gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and US Veteran status. The data is reviewed internally for the aggregate analysis of candidate pools to help ensure firm practices are inclusive and representative.

While respecting our past and current clients' confidentiality, we would be happy to share with you, in person, examples of the role we can play in helping the hiring team navigate these important and timely issues.

## Land and Labor Acknowledgement

As an executive search firm that works on behalf of colleges, universities, schools, and nonprofit organizations nationwide, we know how important it is to show respect for our past, acknowledge the present, and work towards a more just future. We recognize the incredible responsibility and privilege that we have as an executive search firm to place leaders in our educational institutions around the globe and how important it is for us to recognize our place within that living history.

We also acknowledge the labor of enslaved people who helped build our country's foundation. We recognize that the wealth and prosperity of our nation, and our institutions of education, were built on the backs of enslaved people. We are committed to working towards a more just and equitable society by placing executive leaders in our colleges, universities, schools, and nonprofit organizations and creating workplaces that are inclusive and welcoming to all people.

Land and labor acknowledgments are one tool for education, advocacy, and healing as we recognize the importance of promoting justice, equity, and inclusion. They can help to build relationships, raise awareness, and create more inclusive workplaces.

**Diversified Search Group** is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on the traditional lands of the Lenapehoking people.

Fitchburg State University is located in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, on the traditional lands of the Agawam and Pennacook people.

We acknowledge the original stewards of our lands, and we pay our respects to their ancestors and descendants. We are grateful for the opportunity to work and learn on these lands and pledge to be good stewards of it.

## Our Story

In 1974, Diversified Search was founded with an innovative purpose: to place diverse leaders across all industries and sectors. Consultants from **Diversified Search**, **Storbeck Search**, and **Koya Partners** form the **Education Practice** of Diversified Search Group, a single firm comprising a portfolio of search firms focused on specialized market sectors. DSG’s family of firms also includes Alta Associates, BioQuest, Grant Cooper, and Yardstick Management, with niches in cybersecurity, life sciences, academic medicine, and consulting, respectively. In combining, we have deepened our networks and expanded our global reach, while maintaining our commitment to diversity and inclusion and our reputation for personalized service.

The Education Practice excels in executive search on behalf of colleges and universities nationwide. Our “92” Net Promoter Score – measuring the quality of our search methodology and client satisfaction – is considered exceptional in the industry. (For comparison, the global benchmark of companies across all industries that measure NPS is 32.) Today with over 300 employees, Diversified Search Group is the largest woman-founded retained executive search firm in the world, with the most diverse leadership team in the industry. We regularly produce more diverse candidate pools and placements than any leading executive search firm in the country.

Diversified Search Group has been ranked among the top ten search firms in the world by *Forbes*. Additionally, DSG is the official U.S. partner of AltoPartners, the international alliance of executive search firms that spans 58 offices in 34 countries across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia Pacific.



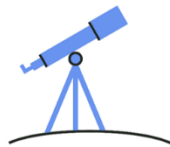
More than two-thirds of our searches are conducted for **returning clients**

**55%**

of placed leaders identify as **women**

Nearly half of placed leaders identify as **persons of color**

**48%**



Since Storbeck’s founding, we have completed **1,000+ searches in the Education and Nonprofit sectors**



**86.5% of our president/chancellor/CEO placements since 2007 are either still in office or served for 5 years or more**



# Our Leadership Search Experience

## Relevant Successes

Diversified Search brings to this search for Fitchburg State University's next President special knowledge gained in two ways:

- ◆ **Years of experience** identifying successful presidents and chancellors for public colleges and universities
- ◆ **Recent searches** that have further strengthened our network, attuned us to the most effective outreach to strong candidates in the current higher education climate, and given us fresh sources of qualified and diverse recommendations for this specific position

Examples of searches that secured new presidents and chancellors for public and private institutions:



[Cathy Cox](#)  
President  
Georgia College & State  
University



[Brenda Allen](#)  
President  
Lincoln University



[Helene D. Gayle](#)  
President  
Spelman College

## Relevant Searches

Our Diversified Search Group and Storbeck Search teams have conducted president/chancellor searches on behalf of the following colleges and universities nationwide:

- ◆ Adelphi University
- ◆ Albertus Magnus College
- ◆ Albion College
- ◆ Albright College
- ◆ Allegheny College
- ◆ American University
- ◆ Austin Peay State University
- ◆ Bates College
- ◆ Boston University
- ◆ Brooklyn College (CUNY)
- ◆ Brandeis University
- ◆ Bucknell University
- ◆ Campbell University
- ◆ Carleton College
- ◆ Carnegie Mellon University
- ◆ Catawba College
- ◆ Central Michigan University
- ◆ Champlain College
- ◆ Clark University
- ◆ Coker University
- ◆ Colby College
- ◆ Colgate University
- ◆ The College at Brockport (SUNY)
- ◆ The College of New Jersey
- ◆ The College of Wooster
- ◆ College of the Atlantic
- ◆ Colorado College
- ◆ Culver-Stockton College
- ◆ Davidson College
- ◆ Delaware Valley University
- ◆ Denison University
- ◆ Doane University
- ◆ Dominican University (IL)
- ◆ Dominican University of California
- ◆ Drew University
- ◆ D'Youville College
- ◆ Edgewood College
- ◆ Elon University
- ◆ Emerson College
- ◆ Fisk University
- ◆ Fitchburg State University
- ◆ Franklin & Marshall College
- ◆ Georgia College and State University
- ◆ Georgia Highlands College
- ◆ Gettysburg College
- ◆ Grand Valley State University
- ◆ Gwynedd Mercy University
- ◆ Hampton University
- ◆ Hanover College
- ◆ Haverford College
- ◆ Hendrix College
- ◆ Indiana University Bloomington
- ◆ Indiana University East
- ◆ Indiana University Kokomo
- ◆ Indiana University Northwest
- ◆ Indiana University Southeast
- ◆ Indiana University South Bend
- ◆ Iona College
- ◆ Jacksonville State University
- ◆ Kalamazoo College
- ◆ Kean University
- ◆ Kent State University
- ◆ Kenyon College
- ◆ Lafayette College
- ◆ Lake Forest College
- ◆ Lake Superior State University (*active search*)
- ◆ Lesley University
- ◆ Lincoln University
- ◆ Luther College
- ◆ Manhattanville College
- ◆ Marietta College (*active search*)
- ◆ Marymount University
- ◆ Mercy College

- ◆ Merrimack College
- ◆ Michigan State University
- ◆ Michigan Technological University
- ◆ Millikin University
- ◆ Molloy College
- ◆ Nebraska Wesleyan University
- ◆ North Carolina Central University
- ◆ North Central College
- ◆ Oglethorpe University
- ◆ Pace University
- ◆ Pennsylvania College of Technology
- ◆ Pennsylvania State University Berks
- ◆ Pennsylvania State University  
Brandywine
- ◆ Pennsylvania State University Hazleton
- ◆ Principia College
- ◆ Queens University of Charlotte
- ◆ Reed College
- ◆ Rhodes College
- ◆ Rider University
- ◆ Ripon College
- ◆ Rollins College
- ◆ Rosemont College
- ◆ Rutgers University–Camden
- ◆ Saint Joseph's University
- ◆ Scripps College
- ◆ Seton Hall University
- ◆ Skidmore College
- ◆ Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania
- ◆ Spelman College
- ◆ St. Olaf College
- ◆ St. Lawrence University
- ◆ Stetson University
- ◆ Stevens Institute of Technology
- ◆ SUNY Buffalo State University (*active  
search*)
- ◆ SUNY Empire State
- ◆ SUNY Fredonia
- ◆ Susquehanna University
- ◆ Swarthmore College
- ◆ Sweet Briar College
- ◆ Temple University
- ◆ Trinity College
- ◆ Trinity University
- ◆ Trocaire College
- ◆ Unity College
- ◆ University of Colorado
- ◆ University of Hartford
- ◆ University of Maine
- ◆ University of Maine at Farmington
- ◆ University of Maine at Fort Kent
- ◆ University of Michigan–Flint
- ◆ University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- ◆ University of Oklahoma
- ◆ University of Oregon
- ◆ University of Pittsburgh
- ◆ University of South Florida Sarasota–  
Manatee
- ◆ University of Southern Indiana
- ◆ University of the South
- ◆ University of Wisconsin–Green Bay
- ◆ University of Wisconsin–Madison
- ◆ University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
- ◆ University of Wisconsin–Parkside
- ◆ University of Wisconsin–Stout
- ◆ University of Wisconsin–Whitewater
- ◆ Ursinus College
- ◆ Vermont State University
- ◆ Wagner College (*active search*)
- ◆ Warren Wilson College
- ◆ Washington & Jefferson College
- ◆ Washington and Lee University
- ◆ Wayne State College
- ◆ Wayne State University
- ◆ Westfield State University
- ◆ Wheaton College (MA)
- ◆ Whitman College
- ◆ Widener University
- ◆ Winston-Salem State University
- ◆ Wilkes University
- ◆ Willamette University
- ◆ Youngstown State University

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## The Team for Your Search

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Searches that succeed are well run. They bring to the fore the finest candidates and deliver a leader who will rise to the new challenge. If we are chosen to partner on this search, we will designate a team of experts who bring extensive experience as well as the ability to support your search with efficiency, timely information, impeccable attention to detail, and discretion.

**Kim M. Morrisson, Ph.D., Managing Director**, and **Euris E. Belle, Managing Director**, will lead the team and take responsibility for all aspects of the search. The complete search team, which will be developed based upon expertise and capacity, includes:

- An **Associate** to assist with candidate identification and recruitment;
- A **Search Coordinator** to provide logistical support throughout the process; and
- A **Research Associate** to provide research support at various stages of the search.

Diversified Search Group is distinguished by the collegial working relationships that our consultants and associates enjoy across the firm. In regular, confidential check-in meetings, we pool our knowledge and networks to support each other's searches, including sharing ideas for candidates. If you choose this team to work with you on this search, you are tapping into the expertise and connections of every member of our staff.



### **Kim M. Morrisson, Ph.D., Managing Director**

Kim Morrisson brings decades of higher education experience to executive search, having served as Vice Provost of the University of Pennsylvania before joining Diversified Search.

Kim's work focuses on educational institutions and nonprofit organizations. She conducts senior executive search assignments for research universities, liberal arts colleges, academic medical centers, nonprofit associations, foundations, independent secondary schools, and companies that serve the educational sector.

Kim has also consulted with colleges and universities on organizational structure and improvement of operations and on program development with particular focus on residential planning, integrating academic and non-academic services, and enhancing student service delivery. She has taught on the faculties of the English Department and the Higher Education Division at the University of Pennsylvania.

Before joining Diversified Search, Kim served as Vice Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, leading the Division of University Life for seven years and serving as Vice Provost and Executive Director of the 21st Century Project for the Undergraduate Experience.

As Vice Provost for University Life, Penn's Division of Student Affairs Kim directed strategic, fiscal and human resource planning for 26 departments and more than 300 staff, led facilities planning for the University's residential system, and acted as University spokesperson on student issues. In earlier roles, she was responsible for managing advising services to undergraduates in the College of Arts and Sciences, and for negotiating solutions to problems brought to the Ombudsman's office of the University.

Kim earned her B.A. *magna cum laude* in English with distinction in the major from Smith College, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. She earned her Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Pennsylvania.



### **Euris E. Belle, Managing Director**

Euris Belle has conducted senior-level searches for public and private colleges and universities, foundations, and a wide range of non-profit organizations. She is based in Diversified Search's Atlanta office.

Among her placements are presidents, chancellors, provosts, chief academic officers, chief diversity officers, chief information officers, and deans of colleges and universities; and CEOs, presidents, and executive directors of not-for-profit organizations.

Her prior executive search experience includes serving as a principal with Heidrick & Struggles and CEO of a specialty retained search firm. Earlier in her career, she was a vice president with a major money center bank and project manager for a systems integration, training and software consulting company. She began her career in the Management Information Consulting Division of Arthur Andersen & Company (now Accenture).

Relevant to this proposal, Euris has conducted presidential searches for Spelman College, Lincoln University, Fisk University, Winston-Salem State University, North Carolina Central University, and Jacksonville State University. She is currently conducting presidential searches for Bethune-Cookman University, Tuskegee University, and Russell Sage College.

Euris earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Computer Studies from Northwestern University.



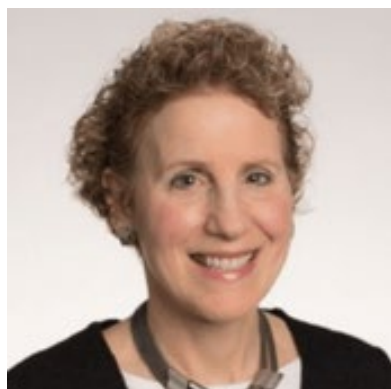
### **Christine Falcone, Senior Search Associate**

Christine brings to executive search ten years of experience in student affairs in higher education supporting students and alumni in their career development journey.

Prior to joining Diversified Search Group, Christine worked at Saint Joseph's University in the Career Development Center as an Associate Director and Pre-Law Advisor. In this role, she managed direct counseling appointments, designed and implemented online career courses, and helped create a successful pre-law program. She built strong one-on-one relationships with students through her work on the counseling team and was committed to providing empathetic support to all those whom she worked with. As Pre-Law Advisor, she established the LEAD Program, a pipeline program for underrepresented students who had an interest in pursuing law school. As a career counselor she successfully navigated the career concerns of incoming freshmen all the way through established alumni seeking career changes.

In addition to her time in the Career Development Center, Christine is also a licensed professional counselor, and supervises those who are working towards licensure. She held leadership roles in the Eastern Association of Colleges and Employers and co-chaired the 2020 conference.

In her higher education assignments with Diversified Search Group, Christine has participated in the placement of deans and provost-level positions. She has also participated in searches for heads of independent schools.



### **Nancy Helfman, Vice President and Senior Search Associate**

Nancy Helfman is a Vice President and Senior Search Associate in Diversified Search Group's Education, Nonprofit, and Arts and Culture Practice. A seasoned executive search consultant, her work focuses on senior-level searches in higher education for academic leaders with a focus on presidents, provosts, and deans, as well as administrative leaders including CFOs, CHROs, and VPs for Student Affairs. Nancy also works on leadership searches for independent schools and a variety of nonprofit organizations. Her career at Diversified search began in the Healthcare Practice working on physician clinical executive leadership and C-Suite searches in academic medical centers and regional healthcare and faith-based systems.

Representative clients include University of Nebraska, University of Texas at San Antonio, Florida International University, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Saint Louis University, Loyola Marymount University, Colby College, Germantown Friends School, and a variety of faith-based institutions. Nancy has expertise in developing and executing search strategies, sourcing, screening, referencing, and facilitating the search process.

Nancy joined Diversified Search in 2004, after a successful 12-year run with her own search consulting practice subcontracting to a number of executive search firms, including Diversified Search. Her executive search career began with a boutique firm specializing in physician leadership searches. Prior to her career in search, Nancy worked in human resources management.

Nancy earned her BA in International Relations and MBA from the University of Pennsylvania.



### **Susan Kart, Senior Associate**

Susan joined Storbeck Search following an academic and curatorial career of more than twenty years.

She brings expertise in the interdisciplinary humanities to Storbeck, with particular focus on small to mid-size liberal arts institutions and local and international art organizations. Prioritizing equity and inclusion, improving campus and workplace climate, and increasing access to education and the arts continue to be driving forces in her work as a recruiter.

Susan is a historian of the arts of Africa; her research, publications and exhibitions focus on West and Central Africa, specifically concerning the display and consumption of African art, along with the social lives of art objects and art movements. She has published widely in academic journals and has held teaching and research appointments at Lehigh University (Bethlehem, PA), Sarah Lawrence College (Bronxville, NY), Vassar College (Poughkeepsie, NY), SCAD (Savannah, GA), and both of her alma maters.

Susan earned a Ph. D in Art History, Arts of Africa, as well as an M.A., MPhil in Art History; Arts of the African Diaspora, Global Feminist Practice from Columbia University. She also received an A.B in Art History; Maya Architecture from Smith College.



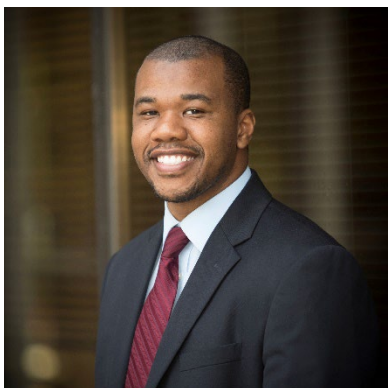
### **Nora Maurer, Senior Search Coordinator**

Nora brings to executive search sixteen years of experience in higher education supporting students, faculty, and staff in their international education and program development endeavors.

Prior to joining Diversified Search Group in 2022, Nora worked at West Chester University of Pennsylvania as the Associate Director of Education Abroad. In this role, she managed direct student advising, faculty-led program development, risk management and mitigation of international programs, and budget development and oversight. She also served as Co-Chair of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education state-wide International Educators Network.

In her higher education assignments with Diversified Search Group, Nora has participated in searches for presidents, vice chancellors, and deans as well as chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officers.

Nora earned her BA in Spanish and Ethnic Studies from Bowling Green State University and her MEd in Higher Education Administration from the University of Toledo.



### **Jay Beckham, Senior Research Associate**

As a research associate, Jay provides strategic intelligence and support throughout the search process while also providing expertise and assistance on technical and research matters.

Previously, Jay served as an Admission Reader in the Undergraduate Admission Office at Princeton University. Jay also worked in the office of Enrollment Management and Student Success at Drexel University and as a Graduate Assistant at the University of Pennsylvania. Jay is a licensed and certified teacher and began his career in education as a K-5 teacher in the Christina School District in Wilmington, Delaware.

Jay has also volunteered his time as a college application coach to high school students in the School District of Philadelphia.

Jay earned an M.S.Ed in Literacy from the University of Pennsylvania and a B.S.Ed in Education from Cabrini University.



# The Search Process

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Across more than 1,000 searches, Diversified Search Group has developed a five-step search and hiring process that has resulted in marked success identifying and securing leaders who thrive at the institutions they serve. Each step provides a framework for an intentional search that is attuned to the needs of the institution and to the marketplace of candidates. Within this framework, Diversified Search will customize the process and develop the best path to identifying a President for Fitchburg State University.

The five steps of our search process are: **Listening**, **Recruiting**, **Assessing**, **Referencing**, and **Hiring**.

## Listening

**Understanding, collaboration, and partnership** are our watchwords as we approach our search process with you. To position you for success, we commit to partnering with the Board and the search committee through the entirety of the search, and we begin by providing expert advice regarding:

- Search committee structure and charge
- Best process and timetable according to your needs
- Strategy and best practices for engaging constituencies in fruitful dialogue

**To develop a strong sense of the opportunities and challenges** facing the University and the next President, we will pose the following questions to all constituents, including trustees, faculty, administrators, staff, students, and others you identify as important to understanding the University:

- What is distinctive about Fitchburg State University?
- What are your specific challenges at this time?
- What do your supporters hope to achieve in the future?
- What are critical attributes desired in the next President?
- What change do you want them to lead?

**We synthesize** the wide-ranging community feedback and use it to draft the position specification, which serves to:

- Provide prospective candidates with vital information and insights regarding the University and the opportunities facing the next President
- Focus the search committee on a common point of reference regarding goals, desired qualifications, and selection criteria for assessing candidates

## Recruiting

**We take a proactive and personalized approach** to recruiting and developing a diverse candidate pool and inclusive process. While sharing the advertisement will draw responses, exceptional candidates must be researched and contacted with attention and care. To develop a robust and diverse candidate pool, we will:

- Draw on our broad networks and talk with individuals who can serve as sources of prospective candidates well matched to your search priorities
- Proactively recruit accomplished candidates who may not be looking for new positions
- Leverage our database and research skills to find candidates with strong ties to Fitchburg State University and the region
- Seek out rising stars from a wide variety of backgrounds to ensure diversity and comprehensiveness of the candidate pool with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, and experience
- Research and pursue candidates from outside of higher education where desired
- Devise specific strategies to attract outstanding candidates who may need additional sensitivity to their circumstances and/or accommodations

## Assessing

To aid in the committee's evaluation of candidates, we will:

- Proactively recruit and assess candidates continuously, using the criteria defined by the committee and laid out in the position specification
- Provide the committee with insights we gather from our conversations with the candidates, which may occur by phone, video, or in person
- Offer additional insights gathered in conversations about candidates and vetting through our shared internal resources

- Share all candidate materials and expressions of interest, encourage open and timely communication, and facilitate confidential tracking of candidates by means of a password-protected portal hosted on our website
- Support a rigorous interview process using standard interview questions and assessments
- Prompt a full and thorough discussion of the strengths, weaknesses, and qualifications of all viable candidates at each meeting with a clear framework to mitigate bias

## Six-Step Referencing

Research shows that interviews are the least reliable indicators of a candidate's success in the job and, in addition, that most unsuccessful hires can be linked directly to poor or incomplete referencing. Diversified Search Group differs from other firms in our unyielding adherence to the "no surprises" rule in search, which powers our approach to due diligence in a six-stage referencing process:

1. **Backgrounding:** Before we even speak to a candidate, we source prospects and their attributes with extensive internet research and leverage the data we have compiled in our comprehensive candidate database.
2. **Connecting:** In parallel with backgrounding candidates, we reach out to our contacts to ask specifically about the candidate in question – confidentially. We are able to do this and maintain confidentiality owing to our years of search experience and the strong networks we have developed. Our contacts trust us, and we trust them.
3. **Discovering:** After the committee has narrowed the candidate pool down to top prospects, we will conduct online presence checks and degree verifications. Working with a trusted vendor, we conduct a full review of all publicly accessible information (e.g., internet, news publications, student newspapers, blogs, social media) to identify any potentially negative information concerning these candidates.
4. **Traditional referencing:** We take this step typically after an initial (in-person or video) interview. We encourage the committee to play an active role in this outreach, and we develop a script and a list of questions based on concerns that were identified during the interviews. Reference reports are fully shared with the entire committee.
5. **Targeted referencing:** Here, too, we encourage the committee to play an active role. It is important to note that this stage of referencing is, like the others, carefully coordinated and structured so that the candidate remains informed about outreach, and we all know who is calling whom, when, and how. We have a highly trained staff of professional recruiters and reference checkers, and whether the committee is involved in this referencing stage or not, we employ an appropriately aggressive referencing model to ensure that we explore all possible avenues of questioning, while balancing the need to be respectful of the candidate.

6. **Verifying:** Once the hiring authority has identified preferred candidate(s), we offer a full background check through a trusted vendor. The report may include: employment verification; civil and criminal legal review and checks; plagiarism checks; confirmation of veteran status as appropriate; national sex offender registry, etc. We share this report only with the hiring officer, as it contains sensitive financial information. If significant issues arise from the report, we make a recommendation to the committee to reconsider the candidate.

## Hiring

Because we are committed to the long-term success of Fitchburg State University, we remain in close partnership during the final phases of the search. As the committee prepares to make its recommendation, we will:

- Advise the Board on lead candidates' compensation packages and concerns related to the offer
- Assist in putting together the terms and conditions of employment for the final candidate
- Offer counsel for leveraging the positive impact of the announcement to lay the foundation for a successful transition
- Recommend best practices, such as a transition team, programs for new educational leaders, and executive coaches
- Provide advice, counsel, and follow-up with Fitchburg State University and the hired candidate to ensure the placement's long-term success

## Additional Services

Upon request, we offer strategic advisory services to aid in the successful completion of your search and support our placement and your institution beyond the date of hire. Our services are designed to help transformational leaders succeed and include independent leadership evaluation through the Hogan Personality Inventory assessment, executive coaching, onboarding and strategic advisory consulting, and connected leadership services.

If you are interested in learning more about the additional services we can provide throughout the search process and beyond, we are happy to elaborate on our offerings.

# The Plan

## Search Timeline

Everything we do is customized to your search. We will work with the search committee to develop a timeline that fits your needs and situation. Below is a possible timeline that can be adjusted as needed.

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
<b>LISTENING</b>						
<i>Meet with search committee and key stakeholders</i>						
<i>Draft and finalize position specification</i>						
<i>Develop recruiting strategy</i>						
<i>Confirm search process and timeline</i>						
<i>Research top prospects and sources</i>						
<b>RECRUITING</b>						
<i>Gather candidate ideas and suggestions</i>						
<i>Begin recruitment phase</i>						
<i>Meet with search committee to discuss progress</i>						
<i>Evaluate prospective candidates</i>						
<b>ASSESSING</b>						
<i>Refine candidate profile and modify recruiting strategy as needed</i>						
<i>Continue to identify and recruit candidates</i>						
<i>Meet with search committee to review and select interviewees</i>						
<i>Interviews</i>						
<b>REFERENCING</b>						
<i>Conduct referencing and background checks</i>						
<i>Conduct targeted references and other due diligence</i>						
<b>HIRING</b>						
<i>Identify lead candidate(s)</i>						
<i>Lead candidate(s) meet(s) with others as appropriate</i>						
<i>Negotiate contract</i>						
<i>Plan announcement</i>						
<i>Announce new President</i>						

# Fee Structure and Guarantees

## Fees and Expenses

- The retainer for our services is set as one third of the placement's first-year compensation or at our minimum of \$70,000, billed over the first three months of the assignment and then adjusted upward at the end if needed.
- Our fee for indirect expenses is 12 percent of the retainer and covers the apportionment of such administrative costs as system database management, technology licenses, and data analytics costs. This fee is billed along with the retainer.
- All fully reimbursable expenses such as travel, advertising, printed materials, overnight delivery, and the services of a third-party vendor to perform background checks and press searches are billed at cost. The total cost for these expenses is driven by the search process and the decisions made by the institution. Direct expenses are invoiced as incurred on a monthly basis.

## Guarantees:

- We will not recruit our placements.
- We will not recruit any person reporting to the placement for a period of one year after the completion of an assignment unless we receive approval granting an exception.
- If a candidate we place leaves the position within 12 months of their start date, we will reinitiate, for expenses only, a search for the same position and level as the original placement, under the following circumstances: (i) the placement's departure is for cause, or (ii) the placement resigns (for reasons that do not include a material change in the job requirements).

## References

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As strong believers in the power of referencing, we highly encourage you to contact the recent clients listed below to learn more about working with us.

### Spelman College, President

**Client contact:** Terri Harris Reed, Ph.D., Senior Vice President & Secretary of the College  
[treed15@spelman.edu](mailto:treed15@spelman.edu), (404) 270-5005

**Placement:** Helene D. Gayle, [hgayle@spelman.edu](mailto:hgayle@spelman.edu)

### Lincoln University, President

**Placement:** Brenda Allen, Ph.D., [ballen@lincoln.edu](mailto:ballen@lincoln.edu), (484) 365-7400

### Nellie Mae Education Foundation, CEO

**Board chair:** Warren Simmons, Ph.D., [warsim51@gmail.com](mailto:warsim51@gmail.com), (401) 225-8659

### Florida International University, Senior Vice President for Advancement & CEO of the FIU Foundation

**Search chair:** Aime Martinez, Ph.D., Senior Vice President, [amartin@fiu.edu](mailto:amartin@fiu.edu), (305) 348-2679