



December 17, 2018

**Statement about the Presidential Search
from Faculty in the Kent State University School of Journalism and Mass
Communication**

In the last search for a new president, Kent State University conducted the process almost entirely in secret. The search was coordinated by a private search firm and no candidate names were revealed before a hiring decision was made. Search Committee members reported they were told to turn in notes they had taken to be destroyed. No public interviews or opportunities for students, faculty, staff or the public to interact with or consider the candidates were permitted. Despite spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on the search, the first the university community learned of any candidate for the job was when the Board of Trustees announced President Beverly Warren had been hired. Through no fault of her own, Warren started as president under a cloud of suspicion because of the secrecy surrounding her hiring.

Kent State University's administrative policy states, "It is the policy of Kent State University that openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is the policy of Kent State University to adhere to the state's Public Records Act, also called Sunshine Laws. ... All records of Kent State University are public unless they are specifically exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code or federal law." [Kent State University Policy Register 5-15.1](#).

The Kent State University School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to instilling in our students a strong appreciation for open government and the right of the press and the public to engage in effective oversight of government agencies. Members of the School's faculty believe that the University's actions in conducting the last presidential search were in contradiction to the expressed values of the University, the principles our School teaches and the requirements of the Ohio Public Records Act. As Ohio Attorney General and Governor-elect Mike DeWine writes in the [2018 Ohio Sunshine Laws, An Open Government Resource Manual](#), "a public office's obligation to turn over application materials and resumes extends to records of private search firms the public office used in the hiring process." Institutions err and plunge themselves into crises when they do not thoroughly vet candidates, and thorough vetting includes public review and assessment.

Thus we, the undersigned members of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication faculty, write to urge that the members of the Board of Trustees and the Presidential Search Committee publicly commit to two things:

- 1) A transparent search process that, at a minimum, allows for pre-hiring public assessment of and document release for a minimum of three finalists or, if

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there are fewer than three finalists, for any candidates who participate in face-to-face interviews (online or in person) with the Search Committee.

- 2) Meeting their obligations under the Ohio Public Records Act, including the retention of records of the search, whether held by the University, the Search Committee or any search firm the University hires to assist in the process. If there is any disagreement about the obligations under the law, we ask the University to request an official opinion from the Ohio Attorney General's office.

We ask the Board of Trustees and the Search Committee to make and publicly state these commitments immediately before the search process progresses.

This statement has been joined by the following JMC faculty members:

Candace Perkins Bowen, Professor

Fred F. Endres, Professor Emeritus

Mark Goodman, Professor

Karl Idsvoog, Associate Professor

Jan Leach, , Associate Professor

Jacqueline Marino, Associate Professor

Mitch McKenney, Associate Professor

Gordon J. Murray, Associate Professor

Ann Schierhorn, Professor Emerita

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