



The State University
of New York


Nancy L. Zimpher
Chancellor

State University Plaza
Albany, New York 12246

www.suny.edu

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Presidential Search Committee, SUNY Downstate Medical Center

From: Nancy L. Zimpher, Chancellor 

Date: March 3, 2016

Subject: Charge to the Presidential Search Committee

It is my pleasure to work with you to identify the next president of SUNY Downstate Medical Center.

Since the founding of the medical school in 1860, Downstate Medical Center has grown to encompass five colleges and schools, a teaching hospital, and a growing research and biotechnology complex. Downstate has a rich history and commitment to educational access and diversity, rigorous academics and medical training, and revolutionary research that has impacted the world of medicine.

When the medical school opened, the school revolutionized medical education in the United States with its unique pedagogy that rejected the idea that physicians should be trained exclusively in a university classroom and instead brought the teaching of medicine to the hospital bedside. According to the Federation of State Medical Boards, Downstate's College of Medicine ranks fourth out of the nation's 144 medical schools in the number of graduates who hold an active license to practice medicine. The College of Nursing has been recognized for its innovative academic programs, including a 15-month accelerated BS program and recent grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to develop innovative approaches to accelerated nursing education that can be taken to scale and replicated in a variety of educational settings. Through the College of Health Related Professions, Downstate developed the nation's first direct-entry midwifery program and offers the only bachelor's degree in diagnostic medical imaging in the metropolitan region.

SUNY Downstate is located in the heart of Brooklyn, the nation's largest and most ethnically diverse community. The University's mission statement relays a commitment to care for and improve globally diverse communities and to foster an environment that embraces cultural diversity. With over 25 percent of the faculty categorizing themselves as being from an under-represented demographic group and 37 percent of the faculty being women, the faculty at Downstate is richly diverse and reflects the cultural diversity of Brooklyn, and their perspectives and experiences add to the value of Downstate's educational and clinical landscape. Downstate has also done an incredible job of increasing its enrollment of diverse populations. The College of Medicine ranks among the top 10 schools of medicine in the United States in the number of African-American students admitted. In 2014, 95 percent of the Downstate student body was drawn from within New York State, 67 percent directly from New York City, and 60 percent self-identified as minority. Several programs at the institution are in place to help attract new diverse students, including the Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education, which assists in the

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preparation of underrepresented minority high school students for careers in medicine, and Operation Success, which is a pre-matriculation summer program designed to provide a sampling of material taught during the first year of medical school.

SUNY Downstate has a tremendous commitment to biomedical research and advancing the medical field. The institution has strong research programs that thrive in the areas of the genetics of alcoholism, neuroscience, memory, cardiovascular disease, molecular biology, optical imaging, and the epidemiology of HIV. Downstate faculty members were the first to produce full-body human images using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and the second to successfully perform open-heart surgery. Prototype MRI and heart-lung machines developed by Downstate faculty are housed in the Smithsonian Institute. Downstate was the first to establish a federally funded dialysis clinic in the country, the first to prove a genetic link to alcoholism, and the first to conduct a federal study of the perinatal transmission of HIV. Of particular note, Dr. Robert F. Furchgott was a Downstate faculty member who won a Nobel Prize in 1998 for identifying the important role that nitric oxide plays in cardiovascular health.

As chancellor, the selection of campus presidents is of utmost importance to me. I greatly rely on their leadership and counsel, and their support helps strengthen the effectiveness of my role as system head. In fact our presidents not only lead their campuses, but serve as part of the SUNY-wide leadership team. This is why the diversity of our presidents in both culture and experience is a major priority for me. We are committed to expanding on SUNY's "systemness" to ensure that we move the entire University forward as a national leader and a major driver of economic revitalization in New York State. I increasingly look to our campus presidents to work collaboratively with other SUNY colleges, administrators, faculty and staff, and surrounding communities to lower cost, enhance productivity, and elevate the importance of degree completion at each of our institutions.

To that end, the Board of Trustees recently enacted the SUNY Excels performance system, which is tied directly to our strategic plan, *The Power of SUNY 2020*. This step underscores our commitment as a university to transparency and continuous improvement toward excellence at every level: system, sector, campus, faculty, staff, and students. I am counting on every president in our system to drive the public commitment to document our performance. Presidential leadership is critical in demonstrating our excellence, and regular presidential reviews will help us monitor our progress.

Through our system's incredible network of 64 institutions, nearly a half-million students, 88,000 faculty and staff, and more than 7,500 degree programs, we are leveraging our assets to maximize SUNY's educational and economic impact for New York. In pursuit of that vision, the search committee is hereby directed to recruit a highly diverse group of candidates with the utmost personal and professional qualifications to fill this position. In consultation with Downstate College Council members, the top three candidates will be sent to me for review, and I will recommend one candidate to the SUNY Board of Trustees; the new president will serve at the pleasure of the Board. As dictated by "The State University of New York Policies of the Board of Trustees," before making its recommendations the Downstate Medical Center College Council shall consult with the presidential search committee. The president shall report directly to the chancellor.

Specifically, we are looking to identify a person with the right skills, knowledge, and connections to build on the great history of Downstate and position the institution as a world class academic medical center dedicated to improving the lives of the people it serves, engaging in cutting-edge research and discovery, and delivering high-quality patient-centered care.

As chief administrative officer of Downstate Medical Center, the president will be responsible for the development and effectiveness of the campus. The president's broad areas of responsibility include working with the Downstate Medical Center's College Council; academic affairs, which encompasses development and ensuring sufficient support of the curriculum; oversight and maintenance of facilities; fundraising and communicating the image of the college; community engagement; financial management of the institution; and resolving issues of student life. I have already mentioned the increasing importance placed on campus presidents working collaboratively with one another. I ask the search committee to be very intentional in identifying candidates with the experience and skills to lead such efforts. This list of responsibilities is by no means exhaustive and includes additional duties detailed in a job description to be developed by the search committee.

I extend a special thank you to Dr. Luther Clark for serving as chair to the presidential search committee, as well as SUNY Board of Trustees Chairman H. Carl McCall for his leadership and in particular in the organization of this unique search process that will move us forward in a timely way. I would also like to recognize and thank Dr. Hubert Keen, president of Farmingdale State College, who will be serving as my designee to your committee; Dr. Jason Lane, who will be serving as my liaison to the committee; and Jennifer LoTurco, who will be serving as the SUNY Board of Trustees liaison. These individuals will work directly with the council, search committee, and search firm. I have every confidence in this process and stand ready to assist in any way I can. I truly look forward to working with you to find the person who will further develop Downstate Medical Center's already tremendous successes and elevate the College to the next level.