Dear Saint Louis University Community,

My name is Jim Smith, a member of the Saint Louis University Board of Trustees. As was recently announced, I have been appointed by the Board to lead the Saint Louis University Presidential Search Committee. I am writing today to share with our community the process we will be using for the search, as was recently approved by the Board of Trustees, and to ask your help in supporting our efforts to identify and hire the next President of Saint Louis University.

There is little doubt that the hiring of a new president at SLU is as important today (and maybe even more important) than it was when we hired Father Biondi over 25 years ago, and he put the University on the path to success that we have enjoyed since his arrival. We know we have extensive challenges and great opportunities today, and we need a leader who will galvanize all elements of the University community to grow SLU to become the leading Catholic university in the United States.

For the last several months, along with others, I have been researching “best practices” for university presidential searches, and we have learned a great deal. Probably the most important thing that we learned is that no matter what publication you read, and regardless with whom you consult, the description of “best practices” is essentially the same. The most important elements of presidential search “best practices” are:

1. A reasonably sized search committee of about 8 to 12 members. A larger group becomes unwieldy and doesn’t function as well; any fewer members threatens not to offer the representation needed to do the job well.

2. The majority of the search committee should be comprised of Trustees, since it is ultimately the Board’s responsibility to hire the president of the University.

3. The process that is used by the search committee in doing its work should be very open and known by everyone who is interested. Anyone connected to the University should have the opportunity to contribute thoughts they have into the development of the position requirements for the next president.
An experienced search firm/consulting company should be used to help the search committee identify, interview and pre-select a limited number of potential candidates who will be proposed to the Board for its final selection.

We will follow all four of these steps in conducting the search for the next president of Saint Louis University.

1. **SEARCH COMMITTEE** – Consistent with “best practices,” the Search Committee will be comprised of 11 members. Six of these members are Trustees from the Board, and five are from other key stakeholder groups. The members of the Search Committee are:

   -- Father James Burshek, S.J. – Board of Trustees
   -- Anne Gagen – Board of Trustees
   -- Dr. Jeffrey Gfeller – Professor and Chairman, Psychology Department, College of Arts and Sciences
   -- John Griesbach – Professor, School of Law
   -- Al Litteken – Board of Trustees
   -- Dr. Teri Murray – Dean, School of Nursing
   -- Dr. Frank O’Donnell – Board of Trustees
   -- Vidur Sharma – President, Student Government Association
   -- Patrick Sly – Vice Chairman, Board of Trustees
   -- Dr. Jane Turner – President, Faculty Senate
   -- Jim Smith – Board of Trustees (Chairman)

We have hired a search firm to assist in our search; AGB Search of Washington, D.C. They are very experienced in academic searches, especially at the presidential level. We reviewed several firms and chose AGB Search because of its extensive experience, and because the managing partner of the firm, Dr. James (Jamie) Ferrare, will personally handle the search. He will be assisted by a three-person team of very experienced consultants. Jamie will be attending all meetings of the Search Committee. You can find further information about AGB on their website. ([www.agbsearch.com](http://www.agbsearch.com))

2. **Search Process** – The search process will consist of three phases:

   **A. Phase 1** — Beginning today, and over the next 30 days, the Search Committee will work with AGB Search to create a position description/profile for the new president. This will include outlining exactly the type of person we want as president, the skills that the person should have, and any other characteristics we think are important. Before we can finalize this description, we need significant input from the University community. To gain this input, AGB Search, led by Jamie, will be conducting many open sessions on campus with a variety of University groups, and with the entire SLU community in two open fora. In these meetings, participants will have the opportunity to comment, question and dialogue about what kind of a person should be hired as our next president. **On October 1 and 2**, meetings have already been scheduled with the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate; the Staff Advisory Committee Executive Board; the Student Government Association; the Deans; the Executive Staff; and the SLU Jesuits.
On **October 14**, there will be two open fora — one in the morning and one in the afternoon — where everyone is welcome to attend and participate. The times and places for these sessions will be communicated via SLU Newslink.

The Search Committee strongly believes that it is critical to solicit comments from anyone who wants to provide input. This is a search that involves the heart and soul of the University — which means everyone — and all should have the ability to participate if they so choose. The end result of this process is that the Search Committee will complete a detailed position description/profile that will be presented to the Board for approval. Our goal is to complete this process by the end of October.

**B. Phase 2** — During the months of November, December and possibly early January, AGB Search will be recruiting and interviewing potential candidates for the presidency. The position description will be posted on all key educational media, and there are a variety of sources from which AGB will draw potential candidates. As preliminary interviews and due diligence are completed, the Committee will begin the process of selecting a short list of candidates for further screening. At the end of the process, we expect to have 8 to 10 potential candidates that we will take into Phase 3.

**C. Phase 3** — Beginning about mid-January, the Search Committee will conduct extensive face-to-face interviews with this group of 8 to 10 candidates. Every member of the Search Committee will have interviewed every candidate. At the end of this initial process, we will reduce the number of candidates, and may even do further interviews as necessary, with the ultimate goal of getting to three finalists for the presidency. Our goal is to have the Board of Trustees select the new president in the month of March — under a process still being determined — and have the president take office at or near the beginning of the 2015 fiscal year in July.

As chair, there is one last point I want to stress: The Search Committee and the Board of Trustees are committed to maintaining an open search. I am more than willing to answer your questions at any time. Feel free to email me ([trusteejsmith@slu.edu](mailto:trusteejsmith@slu.edu)), and I will try to answer your questions as quickly as possible. If you have suggestions for prospective candidates we should consider, they are most welcome.

The search process that we have established is relatively simple, but it does require a considerable amount of work. I am especially grateful to the members of the Search Committee who have volunteered their time and effort to this important undertaking. We are confident that we will identify and hire another great president for Saint Louis University. We very much appreciate your help and support in this process, and remind you of our sincerest interest in responding to any reasonable comment or suggestion you may have related to the search.

Sincerely,

James T. Smith  
Chairman  
Saint Louis University Presidential Search Committee