Dear President Pestello,

Saint Louis University, Provost Search Committee (PSC): Progress Report # 1

You have required that the PSC provide you with monthly progress reports on the search process. Accordingly, on behalf of the PSC, I am happy to submit the following report to you on our progress to date.

1. The PSC has established a cordial working relationship with the consultants from WittKieffer (WK). We have already immensely profited by their advice and experience.

2. A Provost Search Committee website has been established, which we will use to update the University community on our progress: https://www.slu.edu/about/leadership/active-searches/provost-search.php

3. You will have seen the University-wide message that was sent on behalf of the PSC, updating the SLU community on the search process. In this message we stressed our three guiding principles: diversity and inclusion, transparency and confidentiality, and the University’s Catholic and Jesuit mission and identity. The small amount of feedback that we have received following the e-mail appeared to be positive.

4. The entire PSC has now met three times. We have scheduled further meetings every two weeks throughout September, October, and November, leading to an extended candidate selection meeting towards the end of the Fall semester, at which we will choose the selection of candidates for preliminary interviews. These will take place in the first half of December. We expect to have final interviews in St. Louis in January 2021.

5. The PSC has undertaken a Diversity and Inclusion workshop led by Dr Jonathan Smith. In addition, we are inviting Michelle Lewis (Institutional Office for Equity and Diversity) and Katie O’Connell (HR) to brief us on legal and equity issues connected to the search and interview progress. Mickey Luna (HR) and Bill Kauffman (General Counsel) have each provided me with valuable advice on this aspect of the search. I should also like to acknowledge the advice I have received from Prof. Doug Williams, who chaired the 2014 Provost search, and Prof. Bill Johnson (Dean of Law), who chaired the search for the Dean of the Business School.

6. Currently, we are engaged in a sequence of “listening meetings” throughout the University with different groups of faculty, administration, staff, and students. These will help WK and the PSC to draw up the “Leadership Profile” for the position. Currently, we anticipate holding just under twenty such sessions. In addition to these meetings, we are soliciting input on the search from the wider university community via a brief survey which will be released shortly. We expect this
“listening phase” of the search process to conclude by mid-September, when the position will be publicly advertised, and active recruitment will begin.

To conclude, I should like to acknowledge the enormous support that we have received from Ms. Amy Breuer, who is helping us to administer the search. I have every hope that we are currently on course to be able to make our final recommendations to you by February 2021.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or thoughts that you would like to raise with the PSC about the search.

Best wishes,

Jonathan Sawday, Chair PSC