**Transcript from the Presidential Search Forum on February 14, 2020**

The hosts for this forum were Lou Von Thaer, a trustee of The Ohio State University and chair of the Presidential Search Committee, and Susan Olesik, a professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry and co-chair of the University Advisory Subcommittee.

**Lou Von Thaer**: As a trustee, we realize that the most important thing we do in the volunteered time we spend with the university is the time when we get to pick a new leader, and to make sure that the university is well-served [by] someone who can come in and continually make us even better as we continue our rise up, and the university continues on an upward track. So with that, let me hand it over to Susan.

**Susan Olesik**: Hello everyone, I’m Susan Olesik and I’m from the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry and, as Lou mentioned, I’m also the co-chair of the University Advisory Subcommittee. Our other co-chair is currently not here so I will cover this for him. But I want to remind you of a couple of things about the structure of what’s happening today. This discussion is livestreamed, so we have likely as many people online as we have here in place. So when you ask questions you will be on camera, and if you would, please wait until you receive a mic so the livestream people can actually hear and understand what is happening in this room. As Lou mentioned, the purpose of the committee that I am chairing is to basically collect information from within the university. We have a 20-member team on the committee. Every member of the team is reaching out across the university, across the state and other places to make absolutely sure that any subgroup within the university that wants to provide feedback has the opportunity. We are collecting all of that feedback. We will use that feedback then to write what is basically the presidential profile, which is a job description for the president. So today the purpose is to collect information from you. So we have a few questions that we’d like to ask. And if something comes up that you’d like to provide feedback after we leave, we also have comment sheets that are getting passed around to provide ways of providing feedback after the meeting is done. So our first question to you is, “What do you hope the next president will be able to do or to accomplish?” And when you think about that question, “How will you know in three- to five-years whether this individual has accomplished those particular topics?” Anyone want to start the conversation? This is completely a conversation.

**Audience Member:** I’m Alison Armstrong from University Libraries and I would hope that the president could continue to make strides in equity, diversity and inclusion. Those are really important areas and I think they rank at the top on areas where we need to grow and improve.

**Susan Olesik:** What measures do you think we should use to chart that path?

**Audience Member:** Well, I think a couple areas. Sheer numbers don’t do it, although we would like to see students, faculty and staff, people of color, more just general numbers. But I think it’s also a cultural climate to recruit and retain a diverse and inclusive environment. It’s not just about numbers. It’s about how we’re an attractive place to a variety of people for all kinds of good reasons – accessibility included in that as well.

**Susan Olesik:** Thank you. That is a wonderful way to start the conversation. Do we have others who would like to bring up some topics?

**Audience Member:** Thank you for hearing my comments. I hope that the new president will maintain as much unity in the diversity that we have. I don’t particularly think we need to search out more diversity – it finds us. But his job should be to maintain unity and productivity in the diversity and use it to its optimal benefit for everybody in the community. Thank you.

**Susan Olesik:** Do you have any thoughts on how to test and to see if we are improving?

**Audience Member:** Well, you can tell as things develop because certain groups might be persecuted and he is supposed to step in and find the common ground. So when we see these groups being suppressed or something and nobody stepping in to take their side, like an attorney, to take both sides and bring them together, then we know he’s falling short. And when someone is doing that and the question is resolved, the problems are resolved, then he is doing his job. Thank you.

**Susan Olesik:** Thank you. Other comments on this particular topic?

**Audience Member:** Hi, I’m Kelly Mills from University Advancement. I think the one thing that I would really like to see in a leader who is hired to lead our institution is someone who can really establish a clear vision and that really inspires everyone who engages with us – be they students, staff, faculty, alumni, any stakeholders. We’re all striving for the same thing in terms of advancement, engagement and excellence. And in terms of how’d you’d measure that, I think that we’ve seen an increasing rise in our rankings, and that would continue to trend the same way – that students, in terms of who we’re recruiting, that those metrics reflect an even more well-placed, excellent background. We’re recruiting the best of the best, be they students, staff or faculty. And then also, this person has grand visions that inspire our donor base that I work with to give the larger gifts and see increased philanthropy in our communities.

**Audience Member:** Hi, I’m Jasmine Roberts and I’m from the School of Communication and one of the things that I would really like to see our next president do is to essentially be a champion of affordable learning. I know President Drake has done a really great job in making sure that our institution is affordable, not just for those who can afford it, but of course to marginalized populations as well. It’s really sad when universities are supposed to minimize those social inequities and oftentimes because of cost, it tends to exacerbate those social inequities. And so, even if it is as simple as to incentivize faculty to choose a more affordable textbook or what have you, I would really like to see our next president see that as a high priority on their agenda. I think one way to address that or one way to measure that is through DFW rates. For instance, how are we retaining students, especially, again, those who have been historically underserved?

**Susan Olesik:** So to clarify that, do you think we’re in a good spot now or would you like to see it get even better?

**Audience Member:** I certainly think we’re getting better and I think we are at the top of the list to be honest with you. We’re very competitive in that regard, but let’s keep climbing higher.

**Audience Member:** Thank you. I spent yesterday at the Ohio Educational Technology Conference at the convention center and I met a woman who is in the same boat as me and we discussed the problems with disability access all over the campus, and it needs to be improved. I went to Hopkins Hall and you had to take a ramp but it was in the back of the building, it went through parking lots and getting to the back door was not visible to anybody that was disabled. I think a lot of things can be better. I am an alumnus, but I was not disabled at the time I was a student.

**Susan Olesik:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Are there other comments on this particular topic? This one is quite important, of course. No other comments? Well, we can go to the second question then: “What do you feel the key issues, challenges and opportunities facing Ohio State are?” Again, to repeat, key issues. What do you think are the key issues, challenges and opportunities? So, why don’t we start with issues and challenges first? Let’s broaden it out a little bit for the next five years. Don’t just think about the challenges that you have today, but what do you think are the challenges and issues that the new president will see?

**Susan Olesik:** So the present is going to be smooth sailing, I guess? Life is good. There are going to be no challenges or issues? Any thoughts?

**Audience Member:** Hi, I’m Ben Kanzeg with Government Affairs. One of the things that the government in the State of Ohio is struggling with is workforce. I think the new president will have to grapple with is how does our education that our students receive here prepare them to be the employees that employers are wanting to hire? I know that general education is a component of that, but there are many opportunities beyond that and the new president will have to engage all sectors of the university to pull forward together to kind of address some of those needs.

**Susan Olesik:** Okay, thank you. Other issues or challenges?

**Audience Member:** Thank you, again. I’m concerned about some reports on the news that I’m getting from other universities. Other universities are making what they call “safe spaces.” It is kind of inhibiting a full and open dialogue from both sides concerning some current social values, Christianity or conservative values, liberal values, or Democratic and Republicans. I have heard some bad reports from other universities that they are suppressing one side. I think he could be challenged in the future to maintain that equilibrium for the sake of wisdom to hear both sides. Thank you.

**Susan Olesik:** Ohio State is absolutely an open institution, so that is an activity that will never change here. Thank you. Any other challenges that might come up? Sounds like we might be living in Lake Wobegon.

**Lou** **Von Thaer**: While everyone is thinking, just stop and think a minute about how challenging this job is. It is not only to run the university, which is of course the main reason that everyone is here, but in addition to running a university with 60,000 students here and more students across other campuses – we have huge philanthropy needs, we continue to build new buildings and expand research. We have a nearly professional sports program that’s one of the best in the country. We have a medical school that is doing very well and growing. But we have 60 percent of the overall school revenues in just a couple more years. How do we maintain that balance and is that good or bad or how do you think about it? We have a billion-dollar real estate portfolio. This person, as well as being a teacher and managing the actual university, will have many responsibilities in what is equivalent today to about a $7 billion business. So, when we look at the types of persons we are looking for, you can imagine the types of challenges this job has and why you would really like to get someone who is not only a great leader in the academic world, but also has some other skills to guide us through that. So those are the types of things that we are thinking about and maybe if you think about that, too, you can think of some other challenges that relate to the university that we should be aware of that maybe we have not thought of yet.

**Audience Member:** Hello, my name is Taylor Boyles and I’m with University Advancement. I think one of the challenges, being a new person to Columbus since I moved here about a year ago, is continuing to move the Ohio State brand forward beyond a football team. Like you just said, there is so much exciting stuff going on here and I think it is a challenge and a great opportunity to expand to not just our community but the entire country and beyond of all of the great things that are happening here. Each one of those pieces that you brought up needs to be brought to the forefront so that we get, for lack of a better way to say it, taken a little more seriously. I think it will lift us all up, if we make sure that we are championing all of our causes.

**Audience Member:** Hi, I’m Jaynie Tatman with University Advancement. Maybe mine isn’t as strong of a challenge, but at the same time that we will hopefully be bringing in a new president, we will also be bringing in a new president and CEO for the Alumni Association, and so not only will the students, faculty and staff be adjusting to a new president, but our alumni base will also be learning about and hopefully embracing a new leader for that group as well. So I think that while we are choosing two people at the same time, that can be a challenge because we want both people to work well with each other. But we are selecting them at the same time, so they could have potentially different views and opinions on where the university should be, where our alumni should be, so I think that could be a challenge for those people simultaneously.

**Susan Olesik:** Thank you. We are here to listen, so make sure that we have that possibility.

**Audience Member:** Jasmine Roberts, again. I’m also interested in the next president addressing the issue of non-tenured faculty. We have a great deal of non-tenured faculty at this university and it can be kind of a challenge for those faculty members because they do feel marginalized. Oftentimes they aren’t invited to faculty meetings, they have a very high teaching load, and they’re paid severely less or substantially less than their tenured counterparts. We are seeing the trend of non-tenured faculty members across the country, an increased amount of them. How can we do justice to those faculty members who are choosing to engage in academia in a different way? Who might challenge traditional ways of engaging in academia but are still worthwhile? I think that is also an issue that we may need to address more directly here at the university.

**Audience Member:** Are there any universities that you admire?

**Audience Member**: You know, to be quite honest with you, I can’t think of any because this is a new issue. Because of the job market, to be honest with you, with a lot of PhD candidates, or recent PhDs, and the history of tenure. We are seeing more people forced, you could say, into non-tenured positions, but also those who don’t want to do research and they want to focus more on teaching. So again, for those particular faculty members, how can we still make them feel valued? Especially at an R1 institution that is going to prioritize research over teaching. The two really should go hand-in-hand, it shouldn’t be “this or that,” it should be an “and.”

**Susan Olesik:** Anything else? We will go onto question three. If we make a list of qualifications that we need for this person – qualifications, experiences and personal attributes – for the ideal candidate. Can we think about that? So again, I will reword the question: “What do you think are the qualifications, experiences and personal attributes of the ideal candidate? What is essential? What do you think might be helpful?”

**Audience Member:** Hi, Alison Armstrong, again. I think it’s important that the person have experience in higher education and research at a billion-dollar enterprise level and a teaching background of some sort. While I think it’s important to be able to understand the business of a university, which is a huge enterprise, what is fundamental to it? It’s different than business – it’s education, it’s research, it’s learning. So I would prioritize somebody with experience and credentials as a priority.

**Susan Olesik:** Others that want to comment on that or add additional attributes of the ideal candidate?

**Audience Member:** So I don’t think the candidate has to be from Ohio. I do think that the candidate has to understand who we are as Ohioans. Who Ohio State is vs. other big R1 institutions or research institutions, even within Ohio. I think that’s really important. And to understand or to have come from this Midwest sensibility where we work really, really hard and oftentimes don’t celebrate our successes because were too busy working hard. To understand that and to have the ability to lift us up a little bit and cast a vision that says, “Yeah we are doing some things excellently here.”

**Lou Von Thaer:** I think that’s an excellent point. I’ve only been here for a couple years now and the one thing I know for sure is that there is no such thing as “kind of a Buckeye.” And I think that’s great that so much of the city and state revolves around and is intermixed with Ohio State. It is clearly going to be a part to make sure this person understands and gets excited about it and can embrace it.

**Audience Member:** Hi, my name is Hailey Stroup and I’m also a member of the Advancement Team specifically in Foundation Relations. When I think about Ohio State, I went to Ohio State as an undergrad and lived in Columbus my whole life, and I love how connected the university is to the broader community. I think it’s important that new leadership is aware of and sees the potential for what our university does beyond our boundaries and beyond its assets. I think about Weinland Park, I think about the other funders and partners in this community. We have so much in this broader city and region and I would love to see leadership continue to embrace everything that Ohio State can be not only internally but beyond, in the Columbus area, because our community members need us, our expertise and our gifts here.

**Audience Member:** I may have a blend of the three questions. I’m Kathleen Hatch with Student Life, Recreational Sports. I spent the first part of my career at Washington State University, so on my mind is the power of the land grant and playing off of this larger reciprocity of internal and external, and is there a chance right now for this? Having been here for just now almost two years as well, I have a fairly new lens to this great place, but also sort of seeing beyond at times the veneer and the mystique of this beautiful Buckeye family. Is there a chance in a redefining moment to progress this land-grant view and to also really champion human health at the core? Knowing that our brilliance in all parts of this great university endeavor is at its very best when we capture the human potential. So not to just think about the built environment obviously, but our sense of spirit of our human health for faculty and staff and students in a new way. I think that there has been such a dominant, in the last couple of decades, a laser focus, and rightfully so, on mental health. But I think there are moments, particularly here, to capitalize on other parts of health and to change that equation in a really regenerative way, which would be exciting.

**Lou Von Thaer:** Thank you.

**Susan Olesik:** Are there other personal or professional attributes that you think are key?

**Audience Member:** One of the things I wrote down, and I’ve been writing notes as we go along because I think so many of you have such great thoughts, but one thing that I wrote towards the top is someone that has a high IQ but more importantly a high EQ. The human potential piece I think is so important, but we need someone who can really inspire and engage not only the people on this campus, but externally, to find out more about us as well. And you talk so much about the big enterprise and what a giant operation this is – focus is going to need to be so clear and necessary for this role. Somebody who can really zoom out and focus on what we need and not be distracted by things that can be dealt with by all of the other talented people surrounding the president.

**Audience Member:** Hi, my name is Na’Tyra Green and I work in the Office of the President at Ohio State. I think we will need someone who will continue to champion all of the Ohio State campuses and put the emphasis that it is just one Ohio State education. It’s not, “You went to Columbus, so you somehow got a better education,” but put an emphasis all across the board on all of our campuses and at all of our places.

**Susan Olesik:** Absolutely, thank you. Anything else?

**Lou Von Thaer:** If I can ask a different question – you know there is a debate going on in some parts of the country today about what a modern land grant looks like and we’ve talked about that a little bit. I’m interested in getting some of your views. There’s everything from how Arizona State University and Michael Crow have expanded dramatically and their rankings have moved up dramatically. They brought in a ton of outside money with very controversial ways of expanding admissions and adding lots of certifications, certificates and other things. Then there are more traditional Ivy’s and others who have continued to become more exclusive. I’m curious on kind of what the thought process is here. Are we on the right model now? We’ve worked on affordability, but is student debt manageable? Are we getting a degree that I can go into the world and compete that is fair for the amount of cost that it took to get there? And how should Ohio State and this next leadership team think about those issues as we go forward? Just like colleges today look very different than the colleges did a few decades ago, we appear to be at another transition point in our nation to where a lot of the thoughts are going into how we educate, how we can be more affordable and how we can have broader access. I’d be interested in your thoughts kind of along those scales; because that is one of the things we are going to have to decide in how we look for a candidate as far as how they fit personally on that scale.

**Susan Olesik**: Thoughts?

**Audience Member**: I don’t know if this addresses your problem or question exactly, but I am concerned about the focus – that the university maintains its focus. The university is the people. It’s not the buildings or the land, it’s the people. And we mustn’t lose sight of that for one moment and how we invest our resources. Thank you.

**Susan Olesik:** So let’s word that a bit differently. I’ve heard in a number of meetings that I’ve participated in that faculty and staff are actually fairly interested in finding a number of additional places where the university can lead. If you think about Ohio State now, and if you paint the picture for what Ohio State might look like in five years, what are the aspirations? What do you think we should be pushing toward? Don’t think about what we do have now; think about what is happening in the world and what is happening in the country. Where do you want Ohio State to lead and why?

**Audience Member:** So I think the answer to that question has to go back to our land-grant mission and understanding what that is and whom we are here to serve. We are a creature of statute. We were created in the Ohio Revised Code and federal code allowing the state to form the university, so we are responsive to the citizens of Ohio. So a five-year aspiration, going off of accessibility, building on who is our audience, thinking about how we reach more students. And in order to do that, we are going to probably have to think about nontraditional students and what are the ways we can educate them and give them access. Perhaps that’s online, perhaps that’s some mix of in class and online, but I think that is an opportunity for the next president to think about a delivery mechanism to reach some of those nontraditional audiences that we might not currently have access to.

**Audience Member**: I think a five-year aspiration could be community, employee and student satisfaction. I think that we have a lot of great initiatives to boost overall morale. But you could be running on a hamster wheel for however long if you’re not trying to measure or trying to define those outcomes and measure how those initiatives are going. Then we might stay where we are five years from now. And with Ohio State being one of the largest employers in the region and the state, and I think that is incredibly important, we touch, along with faculty and staff, students. Maintaining high-quality faculty and staff is important as well and their satisfaction.

**Audience Member:** I’m from Advancement and I think that we do a good job right now of making sure our students have ample scholarships, but I think we could improve that a lot. Trying to get donors to really focus on how important scholarships are for a student, so they do have the ability to pursue whatever they want to and to go out and be the change that we want them to be in the world and for our future.

**Audience Member:** Hi, I’m Stephen from the College of Arts and Sciences. One thing that I noticed hasn’t been mentioned yet is change management. We have macro-level change happening at the university: Workday implementation, GE revamp, HR transformation. So we need a leader that is going to come in and be able to navigate these large-scale changes, and maybe with some resistance from faculty, staff and students along the way. Being able to navigate those troubled waters as these changes come about is going to be very important.

**Audience Member:** I’m Nikki Thomas and I’m in the ADVANCE Office for recruitment, retention and advancement of women faculty. Getting into the land grant and community engagement aspect of things, I’m really interested in terms of, we talked about the students and all of that, but also how faculty are rewarded and encouraged to engage in their communities and what types of research are valued. And not only that, but also, how are the communities after we leave them? So we have grants to go into the communities, but how are faculty rewarded if technically they are incentivized to build these long-term relationships, but they don’t know if they will get the grant or the grant ends and the university leaves that community as a result? That is my general comment.

**Susan Olesik:** Thank you.

**Audience Member:** I’m Julie Vannatta and I’m an in-house lawyer for the Department of Athletics. So I agree we see a lot of things going on in athletics that happen to the university. I’ve been here 28 years, so I’ve now seen five presidents – and President Gee twice. I think an effective next president needs to be really engaging and personable to a whole lot of people: to students, to faculty members, to donors, to legislatures, to people in other countries. They just need to be terrific and engaging in that way and that takes a special person to be able to react well to 18-year-olds and non-18-year-olds. So I think that that would be a great characteristic in a next president. I also think to be a really effective administration it would be helpful to have a management structure or management team that can allow the university to be nimble in its decision making. We are very big and we are very collegial sometimes, which means that sometimes it can take a long time to get anything done. So I would just encourage you to think about how that person or their ideas they may have for a structure like that would help.

**Audience Member**: I’m Amy Rodriguez and I’m also from the Office of Legal Affairs. I think that I would amplify a lot of the points that have already been made. To Julie’s point just now, this is a time of a lot of leadership change. We have an open general counsel position, an open presidential positon, an open Alumni Association position and a new chief investment officer search going on. I think that it’s a good opportunity for a team to really come together. And to Julie’s point, I do think that it is such a big place that having a strong leadership team that really does operate as a team would help tremendously. It would also help in terms of focus, which I think someone mentioned before. This is an enormous place, so you really need to focus and figure out what your priorities are, and then everybody work toward those. So I think mutually agreed upon priorities that the leadership team is working on would be helpful. And then I think, also, I really want to go back to the point of being simply mission-focused. You’re right that we are an enormous business, but our core mission is really to teach students and to improve society in general. I almost feel like that should be the first thing said at every meeting that ever happens across this university, no matter what. Regardless of what the topic is, we should all focus ourselves and center around why we are here and what is the point of being here. I think sometimes it can be easy to get caught up in the business parts of it without re-centering on why we are here at the core.

**Audience Member:** My name is Kristin and I work here in University Libraries and I just want to echo what you said. My greatest hope is that our next president will continue to support student success initiatives at all levels. So not just for first-year students, but throughout their career here. And also support student who are transfer and campus change students. I think we could do a better job in that area than we currently do. But really, I think the focus is on the students, so that’s what I’d like to see in the future.

**Audience Member:** I’m Melissa DeAngelo and I’m from the Office of the President. One of the things I think the university has a challenge with is allowing employees to have a good career path and opportunities to grow. I think we do a pretty good job with our students, but we’ve just recently undergone the HR Career Roadmap project and I feel like oftentimes we go through these projects and processes and they might take off in the beginning, but then they kind of die out. And then we go through another project and the same thing happens. And I just think it’s really important for the employees to have a clear career path and to have mentors. I don’t think we do a great job of mentoring our employees here at the university. I think all of this starts at the top with the president and with our senior leaders. So I think that’s important.

**Audience Member:** The only thing I would add is that I think a lot of folks here are with Advancement and I think it is really important to have a leader that helps us tell the story of Ohio State – helps us connect donors to this mission, supports this incredible research and the work underway. So having a partner in that work is important for the success at all levels throughout the university. I know that is top of mind with a research institution like ours, but I would just lift that up as an important component.

**Audience Member:** Hello, I’m Donta Ingram from the Office of University Compliance and Integrity. I would just say that “students first” is something that I would like to see and just keep student-centered. Great things happen when you focus on the students and I think that can be translated to business as well. You mentioned Arizona State University and what is happening there. It’s interesting, a lot of their initiatives are actually driven behind, “How do you reach the student and the student who is not visible on campus?” and I think that is great. I think that creativity and innovation, we do a great job of putting forth new ideas and new ways to engage, but I think sometimes we fall back on our default settings and maybe what is safe. So maybe how do we, as we’re moving forward, think about how do we infuse that into everything we do from a business setting but also from an educational perspective as well.

**Audience Member:** I’m David, another Advancement person. I’m with the College of Arts and Sciences and I think reflecting on what a lot of people said, certainly during Dr. Drake’s tenure, thinking about access and affordability and the land-grant mission and what we’ve been able to balance between getting an affordable education and what people get in the state of Ohio and beyond has been a really successful story to tell and to talk about and one that people have resonated with. A lot of the feedback comes from the folks I see and a lot of people have said the idea of someone who brings a certain energy and accessibility is really important. I get a lot of stories from President Gee’s tenure about how he wrote letters right back to folks. People really appreciate that, knowing that no matter who you are or what your role is – if you’re a student, member of the faculty, public, government official – that that office responds to you in a personal and meaningful way. I think if we can find a way to take the time to do that, that’s a lot of the feedback I’ve had.

**Audience Member:** I’m Jamie with Advancement again. So kind of echoing what David said, someone who wants to meet with our alumni and donor base. Of course, we’re on the Advancement team, we’re thinking about that stuff constantly. And obviously, the president’s time is extremely valuable and typically we have him spending time with our greatest contributors. But like David said, those people who remember even the smallest touchpoint from the president, it means so much to them. So somebody who is really willing and interested in connecting with all of our alumni in the best way that he/she can really is meaningful.

**Audience Member:** Hi, I’m Maria from Advancement. I would just simply say it’s a very pivotal time not only in higher education, but also with healthcare in thinking of our medical center. So with such a huge enterprise that the president is going to be managing, I think it would be great to find someone who is unifying and collaborative and charismatic, as folks have said. But also to look at what our existing expertise and research is on the campus to really focus efforts moving forward. If we have certain programs that are really excelling, then let’s build upon and leverage that expertise in those areas to really push us forward.

**Audience Member:** Hi, I’m Natasha with University Advancement and I’m excited for this next opportunity, for this next person coming in to be a champion of people and causes.

**Audience Member:** Hi, I’m Mark. I’m a staff member in Legal and I’ve been at the university since 2008. I would say, as far as the attributes of the next president, like some others have said, EQ is as important as IQ. And also what Julie said about the next president being very engaging to many different segments of the community. As far as discussion on political climate, or divisions in our country, hopefully they will reduce over the next five years, but I’m not really too confident of that, so if not then we need a leader who will bring people together to benefit the university and our state.

**Audience Member:** What I would look for in the next leader of the university is someone who is willing to be a collaborator here in central Ohio. Our region is really poised on the edge of some really great things and Ohio State will be a big part of that. So just to echo much of what folks have said already – be an engaging partner to the other institutions across the region.

**Audience Member:** I think that the next leader needs to be someone who can help the university be a model of safety as far as sexual civility and just keeping all of our people on campus safe and protected.

**Susan Olesik:** Thank you all very much. That was wonderful! I think the remainder of the time we have open for questions that you can bring forward if you’d like. Are there questions out there?

**Audience Member:** Just curious about your steps moving forward. I know some of that information is available, but I’d love to hear sort of looking ahead into this process.

**Lou Von Thaer:** Sure. We’ve laid out a rough schedule, and you can go on the website and you’ll see that. We’re gathering these inputs and we’re going to put together a job description. We put together our team to help pull together information and our team that will actually be the interviewers as part of the trustees’ group and the search firm. And then we’re going to start screening candidates. So we’ll do that and very quietly talk to those candidates and bring in the best ones and eventually we’ll get to recommendations that we will take back to the full board. Our hope is, and I’m very confident that we will, see good candidates. We’re hoping to name someone this summer so we have someone as the new school year starts. But we’re not going to settle if we find we can’t get the right person and we have to go further. I’m confident we’re going to interview lots of people. We’re going to get on an airplane and go talk to people that maybe don’t know they want this job, but need to be convinced because it is such a fabulous place and a wonderful job. And if we get the right person, and I’m confident we’ll have good choices, then we’ll make a decision and announce. And if for some reason we go through that process and we’re just not convinced we found the right person yet, there is a plan of how the university will continue to operate while we continue to extend. But we’re moving fast and I fully expect we will interview people this spring. We will be in a position to either make a decision if we have the right person or to continue to extend, but I’m confident that we will get through that process and we will have a pretty good understanding of who is out there. And we will have talked with a number of them by the end of the school year and hopefully we’ll be successful and be able to announce the new person. Any other questions?

**Audience Member:** Does the process allow for when candidates get down to finalists, is there another opportunity for the broader community to engage with potential presidents or how does that work?

**Lou Von Thaer:** Probably not at a broad level, and the reason for that, you can understand, is if candidates are in jobs they love today and don’t want their employer to know they are looking for a new job. To realistically make this work and to attract the best possible people, what will probably happen is this committee will recommend, we’ll have a ranked order group and we’ll recommend the top group back to the trustees. And then that person will be brought in and we’ll probably have an expanded group, people from the Foundation Board and the administration and others – there will be a subset that will have a chance to look and bless that person or, if there are concerns, not bless that person. And if that person doesn’t work, we go to the next candidate. But we don’t want the candidates’ names showing up in the Dispatch. That would not be helpful in attracting the talent the university really deserves. Anyone else?

**Audience Member:** Just a question for our board members that are here today. What are the top two or three qualities that you are looking for in the next leader of the university?

**Lou Von Thaer:** Well, why don’t I start with one of our other trustees who was gracious enough to attend today and on the search committee, Alex Fischer.

**Alex Fischer:** I’m Alex Fischer, CEO of the Columbus Partnership and a trustee for the last five or six years. So number one, we aren’t going to prejudge it, so we really value these input sessions and advisory groups that are gathering from faculty, researchers and individuals of the medical center and community members. As I think about it, I think you have to think about the priorities. I think somebody mentioned how you start every meeting – what’s first? There are a couple of core missions of teaching, research and community engagement that you have to put at the top of any list, then finding those leaders who have experiences and perspectives of how to move those issues forward in this contemporary world we live in. I think we need that dynamic leader. This is first and foremost a very big leadership job. These are tough, tough, animals that are very complex. I resonate with the comments here of EQ and individuals who have a perspective of diversity of issues, but who are then still grounded in the land-grant mission and that mission in the 21st century. Just from my vantage point of both listening to this room and rooms like this, those are some of the themes that come bubbling up.

**Lou Von Thaer:** I would echo some of that. First off, this will not be my preference of the best person. My job is to lead this team. It’s to take all these inputs and bring that profile together and bring the best person who has that profile back to the board for the board to consider. But I can tell you we’re hearing pretty consistent things as we talk to everyone. A strong, vibrant leader with good EQ who can build a team that can work across boundaries is essential. Someone who believes in the land-grant mission and has experience in the academic world and research. And I think financial acumen because of the complexities in the things that are here. I think there are a number of other things, but those are the top three I keep hearing very consistently. And I was talking to the chair of the Foundation Board just a couple hours ago and, as you might expect, it’s those things and it’s also someone who can help up raise money. Because even though we do want the students to come first, we need somewhere to put them. As we continue to grow and become accessible, I know we’re pretty chock-a-block right now, but you want to be able to expand and build that mission and make sure we have world-class research facilities. I think there will be a lot of discussions and debate, but almost everyone I talk to, I would say if they list their top five, those three are always in the top five. I think that’s going to premise the type of person we’re looking for and I think the personal dynamic, the part that is so hard to measure in interviews, is the part that’s going to be most important. So we’ll do lots of checking once we find someone we really like. We’ll have our search firm help us, but we’ll do lots of reference checking ourselves to really try to get to know the person and understand the type of person we want here. I think that’s just as important as the skills and experiences a person has – can they work with us? Are they willing to spend five nights a week out with alumni and students, and all of those things this job demands? And do they have that energy and are they dynamic? We want this university to be a driver for the Ohio and nation. The personality of this person is a big component of how this actually happens. And their ability to surround themselves with the team that is here and make that team strong and able to execute is what it’s going to take. I run a business just about the same size as Ohio State and I can tell you it’s complex and who your team is and how you operate with that team is really important. And I think those are some of the things we’ll look for as we go through this.

**Alex Fischer:** Even further reflecting on some of the comments here that really resonated with me, I don’t believe this is about hiring a single person. This is about this 100,000-person campus that is faculty and staff and the leadership team that goes with it. So what I wrap all that around is culture and the best leaders understand the importance of culture. They understand the importance of how to build teams, how to motivate teams. It’s not about “do this,” but rather how you bubble the best ideas from rooms like this and from external groups to the campus. So I think there is a big cultural fit. Which doesn’t mean it has to be just as we’ve always done it. But at the same time, what we’ve got to guard against is having a cultural misfit in terms of how it blends to Ohio and to Columbus and to this campus and to the environment. So I would just emphasize that cultural piece as well.

**Lou Von Thaer:** Thanks, Alex. And if I can just add one last piece – in my personal experience, and I suspect this is much like all of yours, the best leaders are also self-aware. They know what they’re good at and they know what they’re not good at, and they don’t pretend to be good at everything. They put people around them and have teams to complement those parts so you’re not dependent on just one person. And again, those are the types of leadership skills we’re really hopeful we’ll find. I think this will be a wonderful job, it’s a hard job, and I suspect we will have a lot of great applicants that come into this. We can’t wait to get to that part, but we’re a little ways off from that. Susan, anything else you’d like to add?

**Susan Olesik:** I’d just like to thank you all for coming**.** It was an incredible, great conversation. Happy Valentine’s Day!