



BETHUNE-COOKMAN UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1904 by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune

Belvin Perry, Jr., Esq, Chair

BETHUNE-COOKMAN UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MEMORANDUM

October 2, 2024

To: Bethune-Cookman University Community
From: Belvin Perry, Jr., Chair
Re: Presidential Search Update and Recommendation

Dear Bethune-Cookman University Community,

As we embark on this pivotal moment in the history of our university, I want to take a moment to express my deep appreciation for the engagement and support of our entire Bethune-Cookman community throughout the presidential search process.

The Presidential Search Committee, in collaboration with Diversified Search Group, has worked diligently over the past several months to identify a leader who can guide our institution forward with vision, stability, and commitment. Today, I am pleased to provide an important update on the progress of the search, and the exciting path ahead for our university.

The Bethune-Cookman University Presidential Search Committee met on Wednesday, September 18, 2024, to vote on advancing Dr. William Berry as the sole candidate for the next President of the University.

Listed below is the summary of the search provided by Diversified Search Group and their recommendation to advance Dr. Berry:

- Diversified Search Group commenced outreach for the role beginning in April of 2023. Prior to the first slate review for the role, DSG generated interest from 120 unique prospects and received 28 nominations. Of those prospects, 10 candidates were presented to the committee for consideration.
- Diversified Search Group conducted additional outreach from September 2023 to February 2024, generating another 75 unique prospects and 13 additional nominations. This round of outreach and screening resulted in the presentation of 5 additional candidates for the role. While interviews were taking place, DSG continued to be in the market to ensure all quality candidates were reviewed.
- Overall, we received 220 applications. Our entire database of contacts consisted of 368 individuals who were contacted during the search process.

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- Despite Dr. Berry’s late entry into the process, his candidacy did not negatively impact the search. In fact, the search was at a point where a number of highly regarded candidates had elected to withdraw from further consideration.
- Dr. Berry appears to have very strong support from faculty, students, and staff. He has proven himself as interim and he will provide stability going forward. Dr. Berry is a known quantity. Feedback received about Dr. Berry throughout this process has resulted in a recommendation from DSG that Dr. Berry is selected as the next President of Bethune-Cookman University.
- If not selected, there are substantial risks to the University to be considered:
 - Given the length of time the search has been underway, it would negatively impact Bethune-Cookman to launch another search for a third time.
 - The market for presidential searches continues to be quite active and B-CU would face competition from several other searches underway. (Morehouse, FAMU, and others.)
 - Dr. Berry has strong support from faculty, staff, and students – groups who interact with Dr. Berry on a regular basis. Not selecting Dr. Berry would have a detrimental impact on the University.
 - Dr. Berry can provide the stability needed to make campus improvements, strengthen the operational infrastructure of the campus, increase morale, and overall, position the University for success, thereby creating a more appealing opportunity for whomever might be Dr. Berry’s ultimate successor.

The following persons are members of the Presidential Search Committee:

Trustees

Judge Belvin Perry, Jr., Chair

Joyous “Pete” Gamble, Vice-Chair

Deveron Gibbons

Jennifer Adams

Jeff Branch

Admiral David Brewer

Lorenzo Brown

John Crossman

Courtney Rhodes

John Williams

Other Members

Renata Floyd, Alumni Representative

Kelvin Mayner, Alumni Representative and Business Owner

Pat Rice, Community Representative and former Editor of the Daytona News Journal

Ervin Ross, Staff Representative

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Wayne Shepherd, Faculty Representative
Dr. Sandra Tucker, Faculty Representative
Dr. Tasha Lucas Youmans, Faculty Representative
Eternity Bradshaw, SGA President
Alice Williams, UMC Representative (Ex-Officio Member, term ended August 1, 2024)

At the conclusion of the September 18, 2024, meeting, the results of the votes taken are as follows:
The vote was 11-5 to advance Dr. Berry as the sole finalist for the next president of Bethune-Cookman University.

Miss Eternity Bradshaw, the SGA president and student representative, moved to advance Dr. Berry as the permanent president, and Dr. Wayne Shepherd, the faculty representative, seconded it. The motion carried.

Voting Members

Trustees Crossman and Brown were absent and did not participate in this vote.

The following individuals voted not to advance Dr. Berry as the next president of BC: Trustees Jennifer Adams, Jeff Branch, Pete Gamble, Deveron Gibbons, and Courtney Rhodes.

As Chair of the Board of Trustees at Bethune-Cookman University, I've had the privilege of working closely with several presidents, including Dr. Edison Jackson, Judge Hubert Grimes (Interim President), Dr. E. LaBrent Chrite, Dr. Hiram Powell (Interim President), and Dr. Lawrence Drake (Interim President). Under the leadership of Dr. Berry, the University has reached remarkable new heights, achieving significant milestones that are a testament to his vision and dedication.

During Dr. Berry's tenure, we have seen enrollment grow to 3,123 students, including one of the largest freshmen classes in recent years, with over 1,400 new students. His leadership has also attracted substantial financial support for the university, including a \$250,000 gift from the United Methodist Church, a \$250,000 donation from J.P. Morgan Chase to address long-standing deferred maintenance issues, and a \$1.4 million gift from Mr. L. Gale Lemerand, who has expressed his strong confidence in Dr. Berry. Lemerand has stated that he sees this as the beginning of a new and prosperous era for Bethune-Cookman University.

Dr. Berry enjoys widespread support from faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members—groups that form the cornerstone of any institution's success. It is well known that without the confidence and trust of these key stakeholders, no president can lead effectively. Dr. Berry's ability to foster this confidence has been a driving force behind the university's recent progress.

Despite this, several trustees who voted not to advance Dr. Berry could not offer any objective reasons for their decision. This move disregards the voices of those who work tirelessly every day to uphold the mission and vision of Bethune-Cookman University. Over the years, I have worked diligently to restore and enhance the university's reputation, and it is disheartening to see decisions being made that undermine the collective input of our community.

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As we move forward, it is critical that we continue to value the voices of our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members in the decision-making process. Their insights, contributions, and dedication are essential to the continued success of this great institution.

Sincerely,

Hon. Belvin Perry, Jr., Esq.
Chairman, Bethune-Cookman University Board of Trustees

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