

## COMMENTARY

# W&M is looking for a superhero for its next president

BY KARLA K. BRUNO

The College of William and Mary's Presidential Search Committee met again on Sept. 15, this time to review their recently published Leadership Profile (the rubric for hiring the next president) and to discuss with the search firm how their recruitment is coming along.

The Leadership Profile — [bit.ly/2xLRv1](http://bit.ly/2xLRv1) — is quintessential William and Mary: long but not boring; attractive but not gaudy; and, ultimately, highly informative. Its most important quality, however, is that it is a public document.

The Board of Visitors may be justly ap-

plauded or decried for following or not following its own rubric for hiring. Transparency and accountability are the hallmarks of such a public document. The rubric calls for the next president to be:

- Traditional, or not: The door is open to candidates who have earned terminal degrees and are on the tenure track (traditional) and to candidates who have demonstrated leadership outside the academy (non-traditional).

- Entrepreneurial: The college is a complex business environment and candidates should have a “strong entrepreneurial aptitude.”

- Academic, or at

least, be a “champion for undergraduate education” and have a “profound understanding of graduate and professional education and scholarly research.”

- Present: The college's history and size demand a president that is known to all and participates in the daily life of the college.

- Committed to diversity and inclusion: Hopefully, that includes conservative points of view on all topics and in all departments.

- Gifted at Communication: With every group, every rank, every constituency. Every one.

- Gifted at fundrais-

ing: Two of the five duties listed in the profile for the next president center on mega-fundraising. It's a tall order, but the search committee is clear on what it wants, based on more than 150 listening sessions with stakeholders.

The average, the search firm representative assures, is 40-60 listening sessions in a presidential search. W&M, of course, is going for the bold. Notably, a previously-heard requirement that the next president have some connection to the college is not in the profile.

Of this I am glad.

It is a handoff when we most need free hands to welcome the best candidate for the job. The confidential nature of the process from this point forward (candidate selection and interviews) necessarily means that news on committee activities will be almost nil between now and February, but that is typical, as noted in the recent UVa. presidential search. The best candidates won't want to be publicly known, as that would jeopardize their standing in their current positions.

In the meantime, the committee has plans to

communicate other tidbits to allay fears that nothing is happening or that it's all clandestine with sinister intentions. Transparency and accountability are the keys to assuaging Nervous Nellies.

Ultimately, though, we must rely on the clear rubric of the search committee and the good judgment of its members. The former should mitigate concern over the latter.

*Bruno is a 1981 and 1992 graduate of the college and author of “William and Mary and Tyler, Too: a biography of Lyon G. Tyler,” due out in 2018.*

