



University of the Virgin Islands
Search for the President
Suggestions for Successful Finalist Interviews

Thanks for participating in the finalist round interviews with the presidential search candidates this November. This document is intended to provide you with some guidance as you prepare for your discussions with the finalist candidates.

Something to keep in mind — as members of the UVI campus community, your experience and understanding of studying/teaching/working at UVI may not be readily accessible to someone from outside. While you may expect candidates to have a basic sense of your campus — as reported via standard media, social media, and UVI’s web presence — without full immersion in your culture, you cannot expect them to speak authoritatively about what they would do or what is ‘right’ for your community.

Your meeting with each candidate will last about 60 minutes, which includes introductions (typically, interviews start with introductions around the table). We also recommend leaving time for candidate questions (~10 min).

We are sure that you have many questions for the candidates, and it is unlikely that you are going to be able to get to all of them. We recommend that all members of the interview group have a chance to speak, so try to go around the room and give everyone a chance to ask a question and engage with the candidate.

Below, we have included the official description of the president role (as defined by the Board of Trustees and search committee in the official position profile), as well as the opportunities and challenges on the horizon for this hire that the Board of Trustees and search committee identified together at the start of the search. This will give you an early understanding of what is at stake, and what campus leadership hopes this hire will accomplish.

For reference, we have also included a list of questions that was developed by the search committee. Please read through this list to better understand what has already been asked of these candidates, and inspiration regarding topics in which you may wish to engage with the candidates. You will see that these are directly related to the job description and the candidate’s relevant prior experience.

After interviewing the candidates, we ask that you fill out the feedback survey that will be posted on the presidential search page. Your insights and observations will help inform the search committee’s final assessment, and the Board of Trustees’ final decision. Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in these important conversations with our finalists. This is an incredible contribution to make to UVI, and we appreciate your seriousness of purpose.

Role of the President (as described by the search committee and Board of Trustees in the official position profile)

Reporting directly to the Board, the president is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the University and its strategic institutional leadership, promoting the educational and administrative effectiveness of the institution, building community and professional relationships, fundraising, and executing a vision that will ultimately advance the mission of The University of the Virgin Islands. The incoming president must be a civically engaged ambassador and spokesperson for the University. This leader will be highly visible, an active community participant, and engaged with various business entities and the local and federal government.

The president must be an intentional and respectful manager; a relentless advocate for students, faculty, and staff; and a convincing, credible leader of a complex organization dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, and service. The president must be inspirational, encouraging key campus constituents to work together to achieve operational, instructional, and academic excellence. As an external advocate, the president must develop appropriate coalitions, build pathway and bridge programming with local public and private schools, promote higher education, engage in educational finance debates, and build strong working relationships and partnerships with government, businesses, and industry.

UVI's dedicated and passionate students, faculty, staff, and alumni are ardently supportive of the institution and its future. Though the University is still rebuilding following back-to-back Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, the institution has remained resilient in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The next president will celebrate and support this resilience through the establishment of an emergency response fund and emergency preparedness plan. Ultimately, UVI's next leader will strategically advance the institution for a future of innovative educational initiatives and expand and strengthen the existing relationships with local educational institutions.

Reporting directly to the president are the provost & vice president for academic affairs, vice president for information services and institutional assessment, vice president for institutional advancement, vice president for business development and innovation, vice provost for research and graduate studies, the vice president for administration and finance & chief financial officer, dean of students on the St. Thomas campus, dean of students on the Albert A. Sheen campus, director of campus operations on the Albert A. Sheen campus, and the director of presidential operations.

Opportunities and Challenges on the Horizon for the President (as described in the position profile)

1. Refine, articulate, and implement the strategic vision for UVI
2. Grow enrollment, raise UVI's profile, and enhance the student experience
3. Assess, enhance, and stabilize operations to increase exceptional stakeholder service
4. Provide inclusive and accessible leadership for the UVI community that enhances communication, collegiality, and transparency

5. Diversify, generate, and steward financial resources through fundraising
6. Ensure that UVI is an integral strategic partner to the Territory

Questions Asked of all Candidates by the Search Committee

- What experience do you have developing, articulating, and implementing a strategic plan or vision for your unit or institution?
- How have you cultivated and executed your vision for academic excellence and enhanced research productivity in your current or past roles?
- What programmatic initiatives have you strategically spearheaded to distinguish your institution and how have they helped to grow enrollment?
- What have been some of the key issues and/or challenges related to the student population at your institution, and how have you worked to strengthen the student experience and increase retention?
- How have you developed a vision of operational excellence and customer service that employees across the institution can embrace and implement; and in what ways would employees be held assessed and held accountable for maintaining this standard?
- Illustrate a scenario in which the need arose to reorganize an administrative department, and outline the steps taken in the review process that led to the decision to implement the restructuring.
- HBCUs have a rich cultural history and sense of tradition and UVI is no different; how have you personally helped to cultivate and sustain your institution's culture and identity?
- How do you define shared governance, and can you give us a specific example where shared governance was a critical component of your leadership?
- Please tell us about your financial management and budgetary oversight and experience and include an example of the most difficult financial challenge that you have had to address.
- Please tell us about your involvement in fundraising efforts, assessing public, private, and non-governmental donors, and specifically the role you've personally played in stewarding and soliciting gifts.
- Describe your experience developing relationships with and securing funding from policymakers, elected officials, government agencies, business leaders, and other community stakeholders.
- Entrepreneurial ventures are vitally important to the Territory; what connections have you facilitated to bolster entrepreneurship at your institution?
- What do you consider some of the most significant challenges facing higher education broadly, HBCUs, and UVI specifically, and how do you imagine addressing those challenges as president of UVI?

A Few Reminders About Interviewing Best Practices

- Please remember, while on the one hand, your role is to assess the candidates, you need to simultaneously present as a recruiter—supportive of their candidacy and always encouraging.
- Be honest, open, and compelling about the leadership challenges and opportunities for the position, including the institutional support or efforts that are already underway (strategic plans, fundraising campaigns, or other efforts that signal things on the horizon).
- Avoid complaints about institutional frustrations and/or criticizing administrators or colleagues.
- Do not pose questions that require the candidate to solve intractable problems, weigh in on hot-button issues, or mediate/adjudicate conflicts.
- Do not make comments or inquire about a candidate's place of origin, family, religion, age, etc. *(these are illegal in an interview setting)*
- Comments about someone's presentation, attire, appearance, or accent should be avoided.
- Poor attendance or a series of late arrivals/early departures can be perceived as disrespectful or indicate that people are not engaged; please do not check your personal tech during meetings.
- Inappropriate small talk before or after meetings should be avoided.
- Avoid heated debates, cross-examinations, or refuting something the candidate has said.
- Do not make references to other candidates.