May 17, 2021

To: University of South Carolina Board of Trustees

C/o: L. Cameron Howell IV, Ph.D.
Secretary, UofSC Board of Trustees

From: Shelley H. Dempsey, Ph.D.
President, UofSC Staff Senate

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the University of South Carolina Staff Senate, I am writing to request an immediate review of the Presidential Candidate Search Committee Policy (BTRU 3.01) that was recently adopted on 8.14.2020.

- At the time of the BTRU 3.01 adoption, the inaugural Staff Senate was in formation but not yet established with officers and senators. Today, Staff Senate has seven executive officers and 44 elected senators representing 4956 staff on the Columbia campus, including every academic and administrative unit. Further, Staff Senate was established with the support of all university vice presidents who assisted in the allocation of Senate seats, creation of bylaws, and initial establishment of our foundation as a key body at the University of South Carolina.

- The new BTRU 3.01 policy was established to increase the transparency of a presidential search and to allow greater representation of the University’s faculty, staff, and student constituencies in an essential process for the health and prosperity of our university. Currently, faculty are represented through 5 seats on the search committee via the various faculty leadership groups on our campuses. Student government has 1 seat. However, there is currently zero representation on behalf of university staff as a seat has not been allocated to Staff Senate.

- Understanding the desire to keep the search committee to a manageable size, the addition of 1 seat for the Staff Senate President, will allow for the representation of 4956 UofSC employees in this important process. In its current state, this presidential search process excludes 65% with of our campus employees – a glaring void for a policy in which the intent was an improved search process. The 2634 faculty make up the other 35% of UofSC employees that are represented.

- As this is a new search policy that has not yet been utilized, and the Staff Senate is a newly formed body, the timing is appropriate to make an adjustment. To exclude staff in the upcoming search would set a precedent that would be harmful to both the UofSC staff and the Staff Senate’s role on our campus. Moreover, excluding staff representation from the process
would negate the Board of Trustee’s intent to host a presidential search that is both transparent and inclusive of our campus constituencies.

University staff care deeply about our campus, and we want to see the success of strong leadership. We look forward to participating in the processes and ask for your support in recognizing the importance of staff representation on this important committee.

Please note that this letter serves as a reiteration of the same request to the BoT by letter in September 2020 and in person in December of 2020 to which we did not get a response.

I am available at your convenience for further discussion or to provide additional information by phone (803) 777-9441 or email sdempsey@mailbox.sc.edu. I look forward to your response.