



# UMB News

## Town Hall Viewers Offer Input On Next UMB President

**July 28, 2020** | By [Mary Therese Phelan](#)

A champion for racial equity, diversity, and inclusion. A robust supporter of interprofessional education. A strong proponent of community engagement. Flexible. Focused. Innovative.

Such is the list of ideal characteristics faculty, staff, students, and community members are seeking in the next president of the [University of Maryland, Baltimore \(UMB\)](#), based on input received over the course of two virtual town hall sessions.

Former UMB President Jay A. Perman, MD, announced in November 2019 that he would be leaving his position to become chancellor of the [University System of Maryland \(USM\)](#) and UMB Provost **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, was subsequently named to serve as interim president while an expedited national search conducted by Boston-based search firm Isaacson, Miller got underway.

“Thank you for taking the time today to meet with us,” said USM Regent **William T. Wood, JD**, chairman of the [UMB Presidential Search Committee](#) as he introduced himself to viewers. Wood has served nine years on the [UMB Foundation Board of Trustees](#) and is a graduate of the [University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law](#). “I feel like I’m back home again when I’m talking to people that are interested in the presidency at UMB.”

The meetings, held July 17 and July 20 via the Webex video conferencing platform, provided members of the UMB community an opportunity to weigh in before the USM Board of Regents votes on a candidate this fall.

The search team has met with key individuals and groups from around the University, pouring what they’ve learned into a working draft of a [Presidential Position Profile](#) PDF, explained Philip Jaeger, a partner at Isaacson, Miller. He helped to facilitate the town halls along with **Kristy Novak, MS**, assistant director, graduate clinical placements, [University of Maryland School of Nursing](#), and president of the [UMB Staff Senate](#); and **Joshua M. Abzug, MD**, associate professor, [University of Maryland School of Medicine](#) and president of the [UMB Faculty Senate](#).

On July 22, UMB launched its [Presidential Search website](#) featuring information about the search process; Isaacson, Miller; and the members of the search committee.

The topic of a future president’s commitment to racial equity, diversity, and inclusion was on the minds of several viewers.

“Up until now, we’ve had a lot of leadership that does not necessarily feel equipped to address these issues, and so I noticed there’s a whole section in the presidential profile about these issues but, who on the search committee is actually equipped to determine whether or not the candidates are conversant on these issues of race and oppression?” one participant asked.



*William T. "Bill" Wood*

"Ideally it does not fall on one person to speak to this topic," Jaeger responded. "When the candidates meet with the search committee, we explicitly and deliberately create questions that get to understanding the candidate's experience, and where they've used their political and professional capital to advance diversity. So, we're hearing from the candidates. And again, it's not falling on one committee members' shoulders, as it were, to own this topic."

Joann Boughman, PhD, senior vice chancellor, academic and student affairs at USM, who is on the search committee and helped to answer questions during the virtual town halls, said the consultants from Isaacson, Miller have made it clear to the committee, "this is not just words being said, that this is a set of values deeply felt and deeply believed in and of extreme importance."

"When Chancellor Perman put together this committee, I think he was very seriously engaged in these issues, and challenged us with them," she continued. "But we hear this comment, this is exactly one of the reasons that we have these interactions. I think you've stated it succinctly and clearly and believe me, this will be taken back to the committee as a whole."

Wood also noted that the search committee itself is comprised of "a very diverse group of people with different perspectives, who bring collectively a very strong understanding of the importance of diversity."

A faculty member added that while the search firm says it will consider a diverse pool of applicants, since there is traditionally a lack of diversity in high-level positions of academia these diverse applicants won't make it into

the pool to begin with.

"That embracing of diversity with the new leader for UMB would need to be shown in actions to how those diverse populations, staff, faculty, and others on campus, are actually nurtured to become a leader," she said. "And that would be very important because when we talk diversity, we cannot only consider a straightforward path to leadership because diverse populations have had to go around all the glass ceilings, possibly to get to a point and possibly not."

In Baltimore, African Americans make up more than 60 percent of the population, another participant pointed out.

"I really don't think that we can have a president in today's day and age without that person having an active understanding of intersectional justice," she said.

The search committee was selected by Perman, Boughman noted. "And I think we all know that he has a sincere interest in the matters we're talking about."

Another participant noted the draft presidential profile lacked a position on the LGBTQ Plus community at UMB.

"We do have a significant population of LGBTQ students at UMB and there are several groups on campus," the participant said. "And I think that it's very important that our leadership going forward is thinking about these issues and making sure that their students, at a variety of intersections, are safe to learn and grow in this community."

Town hall participants also said they wanted Perman's successor to be a staunch supporter of interprofessional education (IPE). Perman created the [Center for IPE Education](#) at UMB and was an avid proponent of the team-based approach to health care.

"As we move forward it would be really important to highlight in the document how much progress has been made in interprofessional education and also challenging and really looking for the president to help us lead through that transformation more into the practice realm between the schools," said a faculty member. "And having faculty have some latitude and additional headway to move into the community and all the other areas where we could practice together and use all those great skills, and also research."

Perman, through his creation of UMB's [Community Engagement Center \(CEC\)](#), was a major advocate for fostering relationships and opportunities between the University and its surrounding neighborhoods. Town hall participants said that kind of engagement must continue. "I think the campus has tremendous potential to benefit Baltimore," one participant said.

Community engagement has been a common theme in interviews and other listening sessions, Jaeger replied. The CEC is featured in the Presidential Position Profile. "We'll make certain that whoever does come in, continues those initiatives, outreach throughout the city of Baltimore. The president has to value that."

Many participants said an ideal new president would also help all seven schools at UMB to collaborate more rather than operating in "silos," which Jaeger said was a common theme in the search firm's conversations with UMB community members.

Other desired qualifications included being a proponent of staff development to teach people from different backgrounds on how to work more effectively; of mentorship opportunities for faculty and staff; and of being forward thinking, especially in times of a pandemic.

"What type of innovations will this person bring to the table and what do they see in the next five or 10 years from an academic institution perspective?" one viewer mentioned as an important question for the search team to consider in selecting candidates. With the entire university being impacted by the pandemic, "how can this leader lead us to a new era beyond the COVID?" the participant asked.

"It's a very good point," said Jaeger. "COVID is transforming what leadership is as a university president."

The USM Board of Regents' bylaws require the board make an appointment of a president after a thorough search. Wood noted that Interim President Jarrell is a candidate for the permanent position, but stressed that it is critical to the integrity of the search process to avoid any perception that this is a search in name only. "We must be sensitive to other qualified candidates. And we must make sure that all qualified candidates get a full, genuine, and fair consideration," he said.

The search must also move quickly, "due to a need to manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the campus, throughout the university system and because of the important role UMB and the president play in the systemwide management of campus issues involving COVID-19, the development of a vaccine, and the continuing unrest that we see all over the country," Wood said.

Input from the town halls will be incorporated into an updated Presidential Position Profile and then the search "will go quiet," Jaeger said. The search team will begin weeks of recruiting and networking across the country to assemble what he described as an "excellent and diverse pool" of candidates.

By Sept. 15, the search committee will make a recommendation of a number of candidates to the Board of Regents, who will interview each candidate. The full board will vote and make the final decision.

Members of the UMB community will not have an opportunity to question candidates, primarily due to sensibilities about confidentiality, Jaeger said.

"The candidates we are going to be talking to will be sitting presidents, deans of schools, and their exposure presents a lot of risk," he said. If candidates are listed as one of several in a search, that is often a deal-breaker, he added.

Members of the UMB community are encouraged to submit their input, as well as their own nominations, to the search email box at [presidentalsearch@umaryland.edu](mailto:presidentalsearch@umaryland.edu) or to Isaacson, Miller at [this webpage](#)  or via mail to: Isaacson, Miller, 263 Summer St., 7th Floor, Boston, MA 02210.

Submitters may remain anonymous.

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