

**Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 24 March 2021**

Chair of Trustees Recruitment

Author(s): Jill Finney (Chair of Trustees)
Abhijay Sood (Union President)
Victoria Agbontaen (Governance Officer)

Decision(s): To approve Inclusive Boards as the recruitment consultant for a new Chair of the Board of Trustees and approve the proposed recruitment process.

1. Recruitment Process Context

The Union needed to recruit one new external member for the Board between now and 31 July 2021, including a new Chair. The External Trustee/Chair recruitment pack went live on 18th November 2020 and following the interview process, the panel of Trustees appointed Dan Wagner who was best suited to fill the position and was subsequently offered the role of Lay Trustee.

It was agreed that none of the other candidates were suitable enough to fill the role of the Chair of the Board and we are now considering the re-recruitment process for this position.

Following the discussion at the February Board meeting, Abhijay, Tom Flynn, Jill, Kate and Victoria met to discuss the potential benefits of using a recruitment consultant to manage and support the recruitment process for the Chair role.

The key drivers of the recruitment process include the need for a targeted recruitment around equality, diversity and inclusion, the need to reach a wider pool of candidates, which we have struggled to do through the in-house recruitment and to have a process that is student-led, working with key stakeholders from Union Council, the Board of Trustees and Senior College staff to also be involved in the interview process.

As the Board of Trustees is not the only driver of good governance but also a crucial component of our system, it was agreed that the use of a recruitment consultant is critically important to the Union to ensure all Union stakeholders felt the process was transparent and robust.

2. Suggested Recruiters

We have contacted five potential recruitment consultants and have included the pros and cons of each one:

1. Atkinson HR Consulting

Pros:

- i. Ensures they are advertising in the right places, targeting specific candidates and asks for recommendations.
- ii. Can provide additional capacity and support in targeting through LinkedIn and other websites, following up potential candidates.
- iii. Has direct experience working with the ICU, specifically the Board of Trustees which is clearly advantageous in supporting and selecting suitable candidates.

Cons:

- i. Is not a head-hunter so does not provide a full executive search and does not operate in the same way head-hunters do.
- ii. Does not necessarily have the wide networks that a specialist recruitment firm will have.
- iii. Expertise mainly lies in recruiting Senior Management roles into Leadership teams.

Price: Atkinson HR Consulting did not feel the service they provide was suited to the type of service and specialised expertise we are looking for therefore no fees were discussed.

2. Inclusive Boards

Pros:

- i. Supports organisations and sectors in their effort to develop more diverse boards and ensure equality, diversity and inclusion. They were originally founded to help make organisations more diverse with a focus on increasing women on Boards.
- ii. Has extensive experience recruiting Trustees and Chairs in the third sector across sectors in the UK and operates an open recruiting process.
- iii. Has a network of over 60,000 professionals which allows for a more diverse and wider pool of talent to select from.
- iv. The aim of their process is to encourage those with a diversity of thought, skills and experience to apply as well as a focus on those who are best placed for the role and avoid 'tokenism' applications.
- v. They will work with us to understand the best fit for our culture and the skills required and use this to produce a candidate pack which uses inclusive language and will make this available on websites in alternative formats.

Cons:

- i. They have not got extensive experience with recruiting for Trustee or Chair roles within Student Unions' which raises the question of cultural fit.

Price: £8500 – if a candidate is not placed through this recruitment round, they will go out to re-recruit at no additional cost.

3. Peridot

Pros:

- i. Have already established a rapport with the Union through the recruitment of the current Managing Director – Tom Flynn.
- ii. Are the market leader in Students' Union recruitment campaigns at both board and executive levels. They have partnered with 6 different Unions on almost 20 different board appointments and can provide a bespoke service.
- iii. Extensive experience with Student Unions' as well as handling Trustee appointments across the sector, which gives them a very large network of relevant people with appropriate values and impressive governance & board leadership skills.
- iv. The adverts go out to market, but they also proactively approach candidates to engage and target specific candidates according to the brief.

Cons:

- i. Staff that have used Peridot as a recruiter in the past do not have the best experiences with them and they are not highly recommended.

Price: £6,750.

4. BAME Recruitment

Pros:

- i. The purpose of BAME Recruitment is to approach recruitment differently and to create fair and equal access to opportunities for everyone.
- ii. Operate a blended approach through Executive Search and Recruitment Marketing.
- iii. They have experience working with student-led organisations, including Warwick Student Union and other relevant Senior staff recruitment experience.
- iv. Have a successful track record of Senior role appointments from diverse backgrounds.
- v. Have a 3-prong approach to recruitment: headhunting, engagement through their extensive diverse networks (including BAME, LGBTQ+ and Disability Networks) and dual branding.
- vi. Can operate with an open recruitment campaign which will enable candidates from all backgrounds or can run a closed campaign with a focus on candidates from diverse and alternative backgrounds only.

Cons:

- i. Does not have a lot of specialist knowledge of the sector or experience working directly with Student Unions' and recruiting for Chair roles.

Price: £7,000.

5. Prospectus

Pros:

- i. Experts in finding and attracting candidates from diverse backgrounds and with a range of experience as well as having a clear EDI commitment.
- ii. Have experience working with Student Unions' and have been recommended by other universities.
- iii. Are experienced in recruiting for the HE sectors and have the capabilities for an in-depth search which is combined with access to networks of quality candidates at senior levels throughout the commercial, public and civil society sectors, and within Parliament.

Cons:

- i. Although they do have experience in working exclusively with the not-for-profit sector, they do not have direct experience recruiting a Chair for a Trustee Board of a University or Student Union.
- ii. Prospectus are the highest priced recruitment consultancy out of the four quotes received.

Price: £15,000 for a Chair role in an organisation over £5m.

Recommendations:

We therefore have two potential recommendations for Board:

1. To approve the use of Inclusive Boards to assist and manage the recruitment process for the Chair of the Board. Throughout the process they have been engaging and have consistently showed a willingness to understand the culture of Imperial College Union as well as qualifying us extensively to ensure a solid understanding of the brief which will enable us to obtain the best candidate for the role.

It was evident upon first contact they had taken the initiative to research the Unions' background and clearly understood we are in a period of transformation and require a confident, knowledgeable, and experienced Chair to take over the Board.

Inclusive Boards specialise in recruiting people from all types of backgrounds and run a process which is open to all candidates while still ensuring to target those with the skills and experience from diverse backgrounds.

2. To arrange individual 30minute meetings with Inclusive Boards, BAME Recruitment and Prospectus for Jill, Abhijay and Kate to interview before making a final decision on what recruiter to appoint.

3. A Recruitment Timeline

A recruitment timeline for candidates is provided below:

24 March 2021	Appointment of the recruitment consult
w/c 29 March 2021	Campaign starts. Briefing meetings and prepare candidate communications and website.
w/c 12 April 2021	Advertisement & Recruitment Process opens/search phase begins & advertising/social media published.
w/c 17 May 2021	Closing date for applications Summary of recommendations to be prepared for review by panel.
w/c 24 May 2021	Shortlisting of Candidates
w/c 31 May 2021	1 st Round of Interviews/Stakeholder Panel
w/c 7 June 2021	2 nd Round of Interviews/Final Selection Panel Interview
23 June 2021	Approval of appointment of Chair at Board
7 July 2021	Chair to attend Board meeting and begin handover with current Chair, Jill Finney.
July – September 2021	Official induction and training to begin for the appointed Chair – to include meetings with Jill and other Stakeholders in the Union and College.
October 2021	Handover will be complete and new Chair will assume the role in its full capacity.

4. Interview Process

Shortlisting Panel

Jill Finney – Chair
Abhijay Sood – Union President
Kate Owen – PARC Chair
Stephen Richardson – External Trustee
One Officer Trustee
One Student Trustee

This panel will be expected to shortlist the candidates to a maximum of four from the applications that will be provided by the recruitment consultant.

Stakeholder Panel Day - Round One (w/c 31st May 2021)

a. Session One: Student Stakeholder Panel

Alex Auyang - Council Chair*
One Council Representative
One Senior student volunteer
Others TBC

b. Session Two: Staff Panel

Tom Flynn – Managing Director
Tom Newman – Head of Membership Services
Rob Scully – Director of Finance and Resources
Ashley Cory – Systems Manager
Others TBC

Selection Panel Day – Round Two (w/c 7th June 2021)

The final shortlist will include a maximum of three potential candidates to be interviewed by the panel.

a. Session One: Officer Trustee Panel:

Shervin Sabeghi – DPW*
Sam Lee – DPFS
Michaela Flegrova – DPE
Ross Unwin - DPCS

b. Session Two: Final Selection Panel:

Jill Finney – Chair*
Abhijay Sood – Union President
President Elect
Kate Owen – PARC Chair
Stephen Richardson – External Trustee
One senior staff member from College

Tom Flynn and Shervin Sabeghi will join the decision discussion after the final interview with the selection panel.