



The Spelman & Johnson Group

Briefing: Executive Search Roundtable, ACE national conference – Phoenix, AZ

A panel of presidents, Bob Kustra, Boise State, David Maxwell, Drake University, and Ernest Colderón, president of the Arizona Board of Regents, in speaking at the Executive Search Roundtable meeting as part of the ACE annual conference articulated what they were seeking in a cabinet level hire—a vice president or dean appointment.

- Relevant experience for the position—not having done the exact position but professional experience that captures the essence of the position
- Intellectual capacity—a professional who understands working in an environment that values learning and can contribute to the intellectual caretaking of the academy
- Demonstrated integrity—does not just talk about ethics but lives the ethics of strong leadership
- Relevant expertise—brings to the position an expertise that will expand the way the position is viewed
- Vision—the ability to see the future, see where the institution/academy is heading
- Strategic thinking—can see the future and move the institution/division forward
- Commitment to the institutional mission and core values
- Communication and interpersonal skills—speak to a wide variety of constituents and tell the narrative in different ways
- Collegiality—this professional needs to be the right fit with the institution
- Management skills—be in charge of his or her part of the institution but also be part of the senior leadership of the institution
- Leadership—a senior professional must exude confidence in each other, the mission, and the direction of the institution to all constituencies in these times
- The ability to demonstrate leadership for the larger institution—not just his or her area and the ability to make the decision that best serves the institution versus his or her division or school
- Modest self-confidence versus self-promotion
- Breadth of institutional vision—an understanding of the issues faced by your other senior colleagues within their various areas

For those senior professionals considering a presidency other very important skills include the ability to raise money as fundraising is now a “fundamental skill” for a president. Additionally, those senior leaders aspiring to a presidency need to have the political skills to manage a wide variety of constituents both internal and external to the institution in a way that moves an agenda and the institution forward.