January 13, 2016

Dear Members of the Utica College Community,

The Presidential Search Committee met in Albany just before Thanksgiving, and interviewed nine semifinalist candidates for the Presidency of Utica College. All of the semifinalists were accomplished and impressive, and we were grateful to have an opportunity to meet with each of them. From this group of semifinalists, we have chosen for further consideration three finalists whose credentials, personal qualities, and enthusiasm set them apart. We have invited them to come to campus to meet with members of the College community so that they and we can further explore the match between the mission, agenda, aspirations, and people of Utica College and their own skills, experience, and passion.

On behalf of the Presidential Search Committee, I am pleased to announce that the finalists for the position of President of Utica College are:

Dr. Laura Niesen de Abruna, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs and Professor of English, Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT, who will interview on campus on January 26 and 27;

Dr. Charlie T. McCormick, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of English, Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX, who will interview on campus on January 28 and 29; and

Ms. Laura M. Casamento, Executive Vice President and Chief Advancement Officer, Utica College, who will interview on campus on February 1 and 2.

Accompanying this announcement you will find a short biography of each finalist. Prior to the finalists’ visits, we will share complete curriculum vitae (CV) with you.

I have also included below a common itinerary that will be utilized for each of the finalists. We invite and urge you to attend and participate in the sessions set aside for your constituent group and to provide feedback based on those meetings to help inform the deliberations of the full board. This feedback can be provided to me at msalsbury@utica.edu through the evening of February 2.

Finally, this is a great opportunity for all of us to shape the candidates’ impressions of Utica College, and that will be very important in attracting the candidate the Board of Trustees ultimately chooses.
I look forward to seeing you on campus for these important meetings as together we continue the process of identifying the next leader of Utica College.

Sincerely,

Mark Salsbury ’79
Chair, Presidential Search Committee
**Dr. Laura Niesen de Abruna** has more than thirty-five years of experience in higher education, both as a faculty member and as an executive manager with expertise in strategic planning, fund-raising, enrollment management, board relations, and graduate and undergraduate curriculum development. She has had a central role in the fund-raising initiatives at five institutions and has been instrumental in bringing in over $20 million in gifts and $25 million in grants over the course of her career. In the area of strategic planning, she served as Special Assistant to the President for Strategic Planning at SUNY-Oswego and was the officer in charge of strategic planning at Heidelberg University in Ohio. She has served on the Board of Trustees of Ithaca College and has organized board committees at Susquehanna University, Heidelberg University, Roger Williams University, and Sacred Heart University.

In terms of accreditations, she has overseen regional reviews by NEASC, HLC, and Middle States and has also overseen professional accreditation reviews for programs in Social Work, Physical Therapy, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physician Assistant, Athletic Training, Education, Engineering, Architecture, Music, Business, Chemistry, and Construction Management. At Sacred Heart University, she has worked extensively with Enrollment Management, serving as Vice President for Enrollment Management for the 2011-2012 academic year, and focusing on student success in retention, advising, and persistence to graduation. Sacred Heart has enjoyed enrollments over goal of 200 and 500 in the past two years. The university has added 21 new graduate programs at the Master’s and Doctoral levels in the past three years. Many of these degrees have been established as online programs, which bring in over $9 million in revenue each year.

As a graduate of Smith College, Dr. Niesen de Abruna has a deep involvement with the liberal arts, having majored in English and French, and having spent a year at the University of Paris. She received the M.A. and the Ph.D. in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a M. S. Ed. in higher education management from the University of Pennsylvania. She has published extensively on women’s literature, T. S. Eliot, and the role of the public intellectual in higher education. She has received numerous awards, including two Fulbright Fellowships in Belgium and Luxembourg, as well as ACLS, NEH, and ACE fellowships. As a faculty member, she worked at Ithaca College, where she became Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor of English Literature. Previous full time teaching included faculty positions at the University of Puerto Rico and the University of Texas at Austin.

In the past three years, Dr. Niesen de Abruna has been extensively involved in leadership positions at the national level in higher education. She serves as a member of the board for Chief Academic Officers at the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and as the Vice President for the Association of Chief Academic Officers (ACAO), which has been recently established in partnership with the American Council on Education (ACE).
Charlie T. McCormick is Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and a tenured professor of English at Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas. He has served in this position since 2009 with oversight of all academic programs, student services programs, and student success programs.

As Provost, McCormick has institution-wide responsibilities for strategic planning and budgeting through the Planning and Stewardship Committee which he chairs. He is Schreiner’s Title IX coordinator. He also serves as the University’s accreditation liaison to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools—Commission on Colleges and has guided Schreiner through a successful decennial reaffirmation, fifth year interim report, and numerous substantive changes.

When Schreiner received its designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, McCormick created the student success division, writing the federal grant that launched it. He designed and implemented the Schreiner Experience, an innovative program that bundles textbooks in tuition and fees and invests the savings into high-impact learning practices. Additionally, he led the articulation of Schreiner’s liberal learning outcomes, documenting students’ curricular and co-curricular achievements in these areas, and the development of new academic programs, including an online MBA and a bachelor of science in nursing.

Nationally, McCormick has been involved in the leadership development programs sponsored by the Council for Independent Colleges (CIC). He was a member of the CIC’s Presidential Vocation Program for Prospective Presidents in 2014 – 2015. Since 2013, he has conducted CIC’s annual workshop for chief academic officers in their third and fourth years of service. He also has been a keynote speaker at CIC’s department and division chairs workshop for four years. In Texas, working with provosts from four other universities, McCormick founded the innovative Texas Language Consortium, focused on sharing world language programs among institutions to maximize educational offerings and reduce costs. In 2011, he initiated the state’s inaugural undergraduate research day at the Capitol in Austin, now a biennial event. He regularly has served on regional and national boards, including current memberships on the Texas Historical Foundation, the Reacting to the Past Consortium, and the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education.

Prior to joining Schreiner, McCormick was Dean for Academic Affairs at Cabrini College in Radnor, Pennsylvania, for five years. As dean, he was instrumental in the revision of the general education program. Earlier, he re-invigorated and directed Cabrini’s honors program, and served as a tenured faculty member in the English department. McCormick earned a Ph.D. in Folklore and Folklife from the University of Pennsylvania, an M.A. in Anthropology from Texas A&M University, and a B.A. in English from Abilene Christian University. His publications include a co-edited, three-volume encyclopedia of folklore and folklife, a co-edited English composition reader, and articles on popular culture topics.

At Schreiner, McCormick has raised over $4 million in state and federal grants, secured $1 million from private foundations and individual donors for building projects, and cultivated relationships with the Houston and San Antonio rodeos that have brought in over $1 million to support the University’s summer programs. McCormick is a graduate of Leadership Kerr County and Leadership KISD. He is a deacon at his church, and he is chair of the Youth Services Committee for the Kerrville Kiwanis Club.
Laura Casamento  As Executive Vice President and Chief Advancement Officer (EVP), Laura is responsible for three major divisions of operations at Utica College: 1) Advancement planning and administration, including development and campaign planning and management, marketing and communications, alumni and parent relations, government relations, grants and sponsored research management; and 2) financial planning, administration, and analysis, including the operational areas of financial affairs (controller and budget, payroll, contract and other auxiliary services); and 3) strategic enrollment planning and management, including undergraduate, graduate, international admissions, online and extended campus admissions, and student financial services.

As a member of the Leadership Team and President’s Cabinet, Laura is the individual who leads the effort to enhance the college’s resources, advance its place in the higher education marketplace, and achieve the financial strategic initiatives approved by the Board of Trustees.

Prior to her appointment to EVP in 2009, Laura served as Vice President for Institutional Advancement. In the role of chief advancement officer at Utica College, Laura was responsible for all development programs (prospect research, annual fund, major gifts, corporate and foundation relations, grants and stewardship), alumni programs and the National Alumni Association, parent relations, government relations, and marketing and communications (including public relations, media relations, and publications). The advancement division raised $34.1 million in gifts and pledges during the Achieve "A New Dream/A New Era" capital campaign, against a goal of $25 million.

Prior to joining Utica College, Laura was president and chief operating officer of Herkimer County Trust, an independently owned, state chartered bank located in Central New York. She served as president from April 1998 until December 2002, when the bank was sold to The Savings Bank of Utica (now part of M &T). The bank had assets of $350 million and 12 retail locations. Among her many accomplishments, she oversaw a 65% increase in net income during her tenure as president, resulting in the bank being sold at nearly 2.5 times book value.

Laura presently serves on numerous boards including Director, Mohawk Valley EDGE; Director, The Kelberman Center; and Director, Patriot Federal Bank. She is a member of the Strategy Team for MV500, and previously served as Chair, Mohawk Valley EDGE; Trustee, The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, Inc.; Director, Excellus – Utica Region; Director, The Woman’s Fund; and Chairperson for the 2003-2004 United Way of Greater Utica Campaign.

Laura has an M.B.A. in Management from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and an A.A.S. in Data Processing from SUNY Canton. Laura is currently pursuing her Executive Doctorate in Higher Education Management at the University of Pennsylvania, with an anticipated graduation date of May, 2016. She has been the recipient of numerous community awards and recognitions.

Laura and her husband Philip reside in Frankfort, NY. Together, they have five children and four grandchildren.
Presidential Search | Finalist Visit Itinerary

January 26-27 | Dr. Laura Niesen de Abruna
January 28-29 | Dr. Charlie T. McCormick
February 1-2 | Ms. Laura M. Casamento

All candidates will follow the same schedule of meetings.

Day 1 Schedule (Tuesday, Jan. 26; Thursday, Jan. 28; Monday, Feb. 1)

8:00 – 9:45 a.m. Meeting with Search Committee (Willard Conference Room, DePerno Hall)
10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Meeting with President’s and Provost’s Cabinets (Willard Conference Room)
11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Open Staff Session 1 (Carbone Family Auditorium, ECJSCS Building)
12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Lunch with Alumni, Community Leaders, and Former/Emeritus Trustees (Willard Conference Room)
1:45 – 2:45 p.m. Open Faculty Session 1 (Carbone Family Auditorium)
3:00 – 4:00 p.m. Campus Tour
4:15 – 5:15 p.m. Open Student Session 1 (Carbone Family Auditorium)
6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Dinner with Trustees (DuRoss Dining Room)

Day 2 Schedule (Wednesday, Jan. 27; Friday, Jan. 29; Tuesday, Feb. 2)

8:00 – 9:00 a.m. Open Staff Session 2 (Carbone Family Auditorium)
9:15 – 10:15 a.m. Open Faculty Session 2 (Carbone Family Auditorium)
10:30 – 11:30 a.m. Open Student Session 2 (Carbone Family Auditorium)
11:45 – 1:45 p.m. Lunch Meeting with Trustees (Carbone Family Auditorium)
2:00 – 3:45 p.m. Visit and Tour of Utica Area with President Hutton
4:00 – 5:00 p.m. Meeting with Search Committee (Willard Conference Room)
5:15 – 5:45 p.m. Meeting with Board Chair and Search Committee Chair (Financial Affairs Conf. Room, DePerno Hall)