Suggested Dean’s Charge Guidelines (Received from AAMC March 2011)

Once the dean, CEO, or hiring authority has appointed a search committee and its chair, that person must “charge” the committee. A crucial component of the charge is to emphasize the primacy of the search committee in the process. If the process is to have credibility, and therefore attract the most talented candidates, the dean has to clarify that no candidate will be considered whose name has not been generated through the committee nomination and evaluation process.

The dean’s charge also must define:

- **A description** of the sort of department, center, or unit that the institution desires and its anticipated focus. Insofar as possible, the dean should share a summary report of the departmental review.

- **The breadth of the search**—national/international/internal search?

- **The screening process**—external candidates only? will internal candidates be considered? only internal candidates? (University policies might disallow this latter option.)

- **The responsibilities of the position** being sought and the characteristics the dean would like to see in the final selected candidate.

- **Precise instructions** related to the number of finalist candidates to be identified and the composition of this group (e.g., women and minority candidates)

- **Guidelines** for the composition of the detailed position description, advertisements and protocols for the placement of advertisements.

- **Detailed instructions for “casting the net”**
  Casting the net includes communication about the position to deans, chairs, teaching hospital CEOs, and national leadership societies, among others. It also involves calls to selected key leaders in the field. The hiring authority will also want emphasize expectations for:
  a) A proactive approach to identifying women candidates
  b) A proactive approach to identifying minority candidates
  c) Internal candidates. These candidates “raise some of the most delicate and vexing issues faced by the search committee” (McLaughlin & Riesman, 1990, p. 243).

- **Clear instructions related to the confidentiality** of the entire search and screen process. The dean should state the need for absolute confidentiality and should set a policy of zero tolerance for breaches of this “contract” by members of the committee. The pool of candidates in highly specialized disciplines is likely to be limited and the importance of diligent protection of confidentiality by all search committee members and the dean’s office cannot be overstressed. [Note: Committee members will be expected to sign confidentiality agreements]

- **The education of the search committee** about the identification of the essential leadership characteristics not identifiable in “traditional” academic curriculum vitae and bibliographies. Historically, some search committees evaluate candidates for leadership positions such as department chairs and center directors by counting publications and adding up grant dollars. While such tendencies pervade academe in faculty hiring, the best search committees for leadership positions should resist this habit and instead focus on the evaluation of leadership skills and potential.

- **The definition of the responsibilities** of search committee members. For example, the committee chair must inform the members precisely who will be responsible for due diligence telephone calls regarding leading candidates.

- **The timetable for the search** and the date by which the dean expects to be presented with the short list.