

Professor Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer

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TO: Boston University Faculty and Staff

FROM: Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer 

DATE: June 6, 2018

SUBJECT: Professor Thomas Fiedler to Step Down as Dean of the College of Communication (COM); Formation of the Dean Search Advisory Committee

Thomas Fiedler, Professor of the Practice of Journalism and Dean of the College of Communication, has announced that he plans to step down from his leadership role at the conclusion of the 2018-2019 academic year.

Dean Fiedler's leadership over the last 10 years has resulted in a host of important changes within the College that have helped instill a unified culture of excellence across its divisions and elevated its stature for innovation in emerging media. During his service as dean, the College of Communication has seen considerable success in the recruitment of premier faculty from both the scholarly and professional fields, in the growth of its graduate programs, and in the development of its students into top-flight graduates, with nearly 90% of recent bachelors and masters students now working in their chosen areas.

In an age of daily digital transformation, Dean Fiedler has focused on improving the responsiveness and adaptability of COM's curricular offerings to meet the evolving needs of employers, while remaining committed to the College's mission of producing scholarship and graduates capable of shaping the communication world through visual storytelling, advertising, journalism, or public relations. He has recruited exceptional faculty leaders, including research-active tenured and tenure-track faculty, and nationally regarded professional practitioners, including Pulitzer Prize and Emmy winners and *New York Times* bestselling authors. He launched the Division of Emerging Media Studies and the College's first doctoral program and shepherded the complete redesign of its CO 101 *World of Communication* gateway course for a new generation of COM students. Under his leadership, four new professorships – the Feld Professorship in Emerging Media, the Andrew Lack Professorship in Journalism and Business of Media, the Sumner M. Redstone Professorship of Narrative Studies, and the Sandra Frazier Professorship of Public Relations – were established, increasing our ability to successfully recruit outstanding faculty to BU.

Under Dean Fiedler's leadership, COM has seen its profile continue to rise as a respected hub of journalistic training and scholarship, with alumni and faculty consistently earning national honors for their writing, productions, and investigative work. Dean Fiedler launched the New

England Center for Investigative Reporting through COM, which has emerged over the last several years as a national paradigm for non-profit journalism centers serving their communities. A frequent media and political commentator for local television and radio, as well as major national publications, he has been an excellent ambassador for COM, bringing together alumni, industry professionals, and parents to support the College and its strategic direction.

Dean Fiedler joined Boston University in June 2008, following a distinguished career in journalism that included more than 30 years at the *Miami Herald* as an investigative reporter, political columnist, editorial page editor, and finally, executive editor from 2001-2007. Over his tenure at the Herald, he earned national distinction as a champion for journalistic ethics in the newsroom, and in later years as an advocate for the use of new forms of media for news delivery. Dean Fiedler has served as a Visiting Murrow Lecturer and Goldsmith Fellow at Harvard University's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy and co-directed a project, sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation and the Knight Foundation, exploring the future of journalism education. He has been honored by *Crain NewsPro* as one of the nation's most influential journalism educators, recently completed his fourth year as president of the New England First Amendment Coalition, and was this past year elected president of TheConversation.com's U.S. executive committee.

A graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy with a bachelor's in engineering, he went on to receive his master's in journalism from COM. In 2003, Dean Fiedler received a COM Distinguished Alumni Award, and in 2005, the College presented him with the Hugo Shong Lifetime Achievement Award in Journalism. In 2006, he was elected a member of BU's Board of Overseers, and his service as chair of an independent review committee for COM in 2007 contributed to his eventual appointment as dean. Next spring, we will hold an event to celebrate and honor Dean Fiedler's many contributions to Boston University and to the College of Communication.

A national search is planned to identify the next Dean of the College of Communication. The process for constituting a Dean Search Advisory Committee, outlined in the [BU Faculty Handbook](#), specifies that: *"the advisory committee shall consist of three faculty members elected by the faculty of the School for which a dean is to be selected, two faculty members elected by the Faculty Council from other Schools, and as many as three members designated by the provost."*

The faculty members who are appointed to serve on the Advisory Committee will have responsibility for directing the search effort and should be among our most thoughtful, engaged, and committed scholars, teachers, and leaders. Potential committee members should demonstrate the capacity to proactively attract and recruit outstanding candidates for the College of Communication deanship; the faculty most well positioned to carry out this work will be actively engaged in significant ways in their professional communities and within their academic disciplines. Please note that no member of the Advisory Committee may be considered for the position of dean.

I am requesting that the faculty in the College of Communication organize internally to solicit nominations and to elect three faculty representatives to the Search Advisory Committee. Any individual who would have a role in overseeing the election within COM should neither wish to

serve on the Dean Search Advisory Committee nor want to be a candidate for the Dean's position. Accordingly, I have asked Senior Associate Dean Dustin Supa to organize the election to identify the COM representatives. I will hold a special meeting for the COM faculty in early September, 2018 to discuss the search effort.

Boston University's Faculty Council will also be sending an email communication to all members of the faculty on both campuses requesting nominations of candidates external to COM to fill the two elected seats on the Dean's Search Advisory Committee. Nominations or expressions of interest can be sent to the Faculty Council (fafc@bu.edu). Please note that membership on the Faculty Council itself is not an eligibility requirement for election to the Search Advisory Committee by the Faculty Council. I request submission of the results of both of these elections by Friday June 29, 2018. Following receipt, I will appoint additional members so that the Committee will be assembled and prepared to begin its work immediately.

The COM Dean Search Advisory Committee will be charged with responsibility for:

- Proposing refinements to the initial position description;
- Actively soliciting nominations for candidates from appropriate sources within the University and nationally;
- Actively recruiting outstanding candidates who have a record of administrative leadership and achievement and an academic profile suitable for appointment at the level of professor at Boston University;
- Evaluating the qualifications and assessing the strength of nominees and applicants;
- Consulting with the faculty of COM and other school and University stakeholders on finalists; and
- Recommending the names of 3-5 qualified candidates to me, outlining the strengths and limitations of each, for final selection by the President and me, with approval by the Board of Trustees.

The members of the COM Dean Search Advisory Committee should not vote as part of its process and deliberations. Rather, the work should be accomplished by discussion and consensus. Ideally, the committee will conclude its work and submit its recommendations no later than Monday, April 1, 2019.

Please join me in thanking Tom Fiedler for his service to Boston University and to the College of Communication. The formal appointment of the Dean Search Advisory Committee for COM is forthcoming and I appreciate your contributions to and support of the search effort.

cc: Robert A. Brown, President
Cataldo Leone, Chair, Faculty Council
Provost's Cabinet