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TO: Boston University Faculty and Staff

FROM: Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer 

DATE: October 17, 2016

SUBJECT: Professor Gail Steketee to Step Down as Dean of the School of Social Work;
Formation of the Dean Search Advisory Committee

Professor Gail Steketee, who has served with distinction as Dean of the School of Social Work (SSW) since 2008, has announced that she plans to step down from her administrative role and retire from the University. She will continue to serve as Dean through the conclusion of the 2016-2017 academic year, or until her successor is identified.

Dean Steketee has provided exemplary leadership at SSW since her appointment, first in an interim role in 2005 for a period of three years and then, as permanent Dean. She has overseen significant development within the School, both in the caliber of faculty and academic programs, and in the elevation of its profile as a national destination for social work practice, research, and training. Dean Steketee was instrumental in the launch of SSW's online Master's program in Social Work and its fully independent Ph.D. program in Social Work, advances that have dramatically expanded the School's reach and impact through the design of innovative curricula and the enrollment of talented new cohorts of rising professionals and scholars.

Dean Steketee has been a leader at the University in advocating for higher standards of excellence and diversity for faculty. This commitment has been borne out in the recruitment of outstanding junior faculty throughout her deanship, and her support for faculty scholarship formalized through the appointment of SSW's first ever Associate Dean for Research. In 2013, Dean Steketee successfully oversaw her School's reaccreditation from the National Council on Social Work Education, a rigorous process and notable distinction that has helped the School – alongside several other key advances – continue to increase its standing among peer institutions. In 2016, SSW saw its MSW program ranked #12 out of 217 nationally-recognized graduate social work programs in the *U.S. News & World Report* annual ranking.

Among Dean Steketee's signature accomplishments has been the launch in 2015 of the Center for Innovation in Social Work and Health (CISWH), an interdisciplinary institute whose mission is to expand the impact of social work in health care, public health, and global health in order to reduce health costs, improve outcomes, and promote population health and health equity. Created through a \$12.5 million gift, the Center is emerging as a thought leader in this rapidly developing area, engaging scholars and practitioners across the University through a host of

trans-disciplinary and inter-professional collaborations that incorporate community, public, and behavioral health, medicine, health economics, engineering, and other relevant fields. Through community partnerships, outcomes-oriented research, policy development, and important advances in teaching, the Center is seeing early success, due in large part to the leadership of Dean Steketee.

Through her scholarship and teaching, Dean Steketee has been critical to the advance of social work education and research, both at BU and nationally. A member of the faculty since 1986 and a Professor of Clinical Social Work, Dean Steketee is among the nation's most highly regarded experts on cognitive and behavioral treatments for anxiety disorders. She has published extensively, with more than a dozen books and hundreds of scientific articles on obsessions and compulsions, including compulsive hoarding disorder, the subject of her critically acclaimed 2010 book, *Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things*. A frequently featured expert in both print and television, including A&E Network's *Hoarders*, Dean Steketee's research, funded through the National Institute of Mental Health, explores treatments for obsessive compulsive disorder, body dysmorphic disorder, and for compulsive hoarding problems, particularly among the elderly.

Dean Steketee's excellence in research and scholarship and her engagement as a national leader have elevated the presence and profile of SSW regionally and nationally. She serves in a variety of national leadership roles, including the scientific advisory board of the International OCD Foundation, and has been a board member of the National Association of Deans and Directors of MSW programs. She is an elected Fellow in the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (AASWSW) and was elected president of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) for 2016-17. We will honor and celebrate Dean Steketee's many contributions to Boston University and to the School of Social Work at an event in the spring semester.

A national search is planned to identify the next Dean of the School of Social Work. This search, particularly given the online, clinical, and interdisciplinary advancements in SSW as well as its heightened national stature, presents an important opportunity for the University to reflect on the skills and qualities necessary to effectively lead the School in the next decade.

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 School of Social Work 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 him or herself for the position of Dean.

I am requesting that the faculty in the School of Social Work 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 SSW should neither wish to serve on the Dean Search Advisory Committee nor want to be a candidate for the Dean's position him or herself. Accordingly, I have asked Assistant Dean for Field Education Trudy Zimmerman to lead the effort to identify the SSW representatives. I will hold a special meeting for the SSW Faculty later this fall 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 SSW 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 **Monday, November 15, 2016**. Following receipt, I will appoint additional members so that the Committee will be assembled and prepared to begin its work by **Monday, November 28, 2016**.

The SSW 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 SSW 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 SSW 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 **Friday, May 12, 2017**.

The next Dean of SSW will be charged with further enhancing the quality and stature of the School. I encourage all faculty to contribute their expertise and assistance to the formation of this Dean Search Advisory Committee and to the success of its important charge.

cc: Robert A. Brown, President
J. Robb Dixon, Chair, Faculty Council
Provost's Cabinet