

***Academic Search Committee Potholes***  
**The Negatives One Might Encounter During the Search Process**  
By Bruce Dingman

Don't be surprised when:

- A good candidate is reluctant to raise his or her hand: it could be because a colleague is also applying and this person doesn't want to compete against a friend, or they've seen other searches done in the academic world that either lacked confidentiality, were politicized, had a "favorite candidate" who did not go through the same due diligence, took forever to do or the search committee was unorganized.
- Reference checking doesn't reveal all the negatives: the collegial nature of the academic world causes many to not volunteer negative aspects of the candidate's ability, personality or spiritual walk.
- Others assisting on the search committee aren't responsive or don't always handle tasks assigned with excellence.
- It takes extensive, proactive searching to find potential candidates some who might be with an institution that is philosophically different.
- A potential candidate with great academic excellence may not always have organizational leadership acumen.
- An individual wants the president's role for the wrong reason, possibly desiring celebrity rather than humbly wanting to maximize one's opportunity to provide leadership.
- A candidate has significant charisma but lacks humility or sensitivity to the feelings of others.

The biggest mistake a search committee and board of trustees can make is hiring someone who they really don't know, and then being negatively surprised six months later. Being able to see personality, gifting, strengths and weaknesses in a candidate **before being hired** is crucial to making the right selection.

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