

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting  
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Denver  
February 9 – 12, 2018**

**Topic:** ALA Executive Director Search

**Background:** With the Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> announcement that the ALA Executive Director search was unsuccessful, Sandra Hughes-Hassell determined that it would be fruitful to revisit YALSA’s position about ALA Executive Director qualifications. She has provided the information below for the Board’s consideration.

**Action Required:** Consent

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**Proposal**

Send a message of support to ALA President Jim Neal regarding the decision to begin the search for the ALA Executive Director and reiterate our support for the position to be posted with an MLIS degree recommended, but not required.

**Rationale**

The next Executive Director of ALA will have significant impact on the health of Divisions, so sharing YALSA’s position during the search process can help ensure that YALSA’s priorities are heard and needs are met.

**Proposed Letter**

Dear Jim,

As the search for ALA’s next Executive Director enters a new phase, I’m writing on behalf of YALSA’s Board of Directors to thank you and the Search Committee for their efforts to recruit an innovative, entrepreneurial, and experienced leader to serve as ALA’s next Executive Director. We appreciate the commitment that you and the Search Committee have taken to finding an individual who can provide strategic leadership and vision to ALA during these economically, politically, and socially challenging times.

We want to voice our support for reopening the search, and we further support the following:

- Re-opening the discussion with ALA Council regarding that an MLIS be required instead of recommended for the ALA ED, and achieving that as soon as possible via virtual tools, instead of waiting until Midwinter. As you are probably aware, last year YALSA’s Board voiced its opinion that the MLIS requirement was not in ALA’s best interest. The Board’s reasoning on this issue is outlined in [this Board document](#) (.pdf).
- Thanking the current search committee for their dedication and service and forming a new one. The demands of serving on such a committee are high, so bringing in a new group would relieve the current one of further sacrifices to their time and other responsibilities.

- Leveraging the funds available due to the open ED position and contract with a professional transition leader to serve as Interim ED until a long-term one can be hired. One of the riskiest changes an association can experience is the retirement of their Executive Director. The risks include dramatic drops in funding/income, drops in staff morale, Board and donor anxiety, interruption of services, and even bad publicity because of misinformation and rumors. An Interim ED, who specializes in leading transitions, can implement critical internal organizational changes that will put the association on a firmer footing thus making the ED position more attractive to a wider pool of qualified candidates. The Interim ED can also work with the ALA Board and staff to create a healthy, focused beginning for the new ED.

We also want to restate some key qualities YALSA is looking for in ALA's next Executive Director. Specifically, we want an Executive Director who:

- Is a change agent who not only has the dedication to remake ALA but also the proven ability to accept and lead change in a challenging and shifting environment
- Is a visionary who can convert vision into strategy and motivate others by gaining their trust and buy-in and empowering them to succeed
- Shows the ability and desire to improve the culture of ALA
- Is a strong communicator and believes in transparency throughout the organization, including with staff and members
- Has successful experience reorganizing and restructuring an organization
- Is deeply committed to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Understands the not-for-profit association business environment and has a successful track record in leading fundraising and advocacy efforts
- Maintains the highest ethical standards

Thank you for your time, and please don't hesitate to get in touch if there is any way that YALSA can support this important work that you are leading.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sandra Hughes-Hassell, 2017 - 2018 YALSA President

cc YALSA Board of Directors

### **Recommended Board Action**

The Board directs the President to share the above letter with ALA's President and directs YALSA's Division Councilor to share YALSA's position with ALA Council.

### **Additional Resources**

- ALA Council Resolution on the Education Requirements of Future Executive Directors  
<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/counc>

[il\\_documents/2017\\_mw\\_council\\_documents/cd\\_14\\_Resol\\_Edu\\_Req\\_ALAExecDirs\\_Rev11827.pdf](#)

- Job description for ALA Executive Director, <http://www.imsearch.com/modules/1/DisplaySearchPDF.aspx?itemID=s6-242>
- YALSA Midwinter 2017 Board Document #6, ALA Executive Director Search <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/ALAceosearch.pdf>
- "ALA Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels Announces Retirement," <http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2016/09/ala-executive-director-ke...>
- "A Better Job Description for CEOs," <http://associationsnow.com/2013/10/a-better-job-description-for-ceos/>
- List of Nonprofit Executive Recruiters, <https://www.ceoupdate.com/association-and-nonprofit-executive-recruiters>
- Sample job descriptions:
  - For an association CEO <http://www.imsearch.com/modules/1/DisplaySearchPDF.aspx?itemID=s5-759>
  - For a nonprofit executive [https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/hiring/nonprofit-job-description-toolkit/president-\(medium-organization\)](https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/hiring/nonprofit-job-description-toolkit/president-(medium-organization))
- YALSA Executive Director Succession Planning Policy and Procedures, <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/SuccessionPla...>