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## Washington State Charter School Commission Executive Director Finalists Selected

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**Olympia, WA** – Today the Washington State Charter School Commission announced they have selected 4 final candidates in the search for the agency’s next Executive Director, following a national search.

Dr. Heather Lechner, Chair of the Commission said, “From the outset, we worked to include the voices of many stakeholders in the development of this search process. We were pleased to receive such strong interest in this role from qualified candidates from across the country, each who offered a unique set of professional expertise to consider for Washington’s Charter School families. This process has invigorated our excitement for this next era for charter public schools. The next Executive Director of the Charter School Commission will be well-supported in fulfilling their vision and goals for the sector, including our collective commitment to high-quality oversight, strong student academic outcomes, and educational equity.”

The following individuals are finalists for the Executive Director position:

Patrick Gavin is a Development and Strategy Consultant, former Executive Director of the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority, and has also served various roles in the charter public school sector across the U.S. He earned his B.A. in history of art from Yale University and an M.S. in educational psychology from University of Nevada, Las Vegas is anticipated in 2021.

Kaaren Heikes, an independent consultant, is the former Director of Policy and Partnerships at the Washington State Board of Education and has also served in various roles at a charter public school in Portland, Oregon. She earned a B.A. in English and a teaching certificate from Central Washington University, and her M.S. in educational policy, foundations and administration from Portland State University.

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Erica Hernandez-Scott is the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Leadership and Learning Director at Washington State Professional Educator Standards Board. Previously she held instructional roles at several state universities throughout the U.S. She earned her B.A. In elementary education from Rockhurst University, M.A. in curriculum and instructional leadership and Ph.D. in interdisciplinary studies from University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Cecily Kiester is the Head of School of Insight School of Washington and Executive Director at Stride K12. She has held additional roles as Stride K12 including Manager of Regional Operations, Internal Compliance Site Visit Lead and Project Analyst. She earned her B.A in music and M.Ed. in curriculum and instruction from Portland State University.

The agency’s founding executive director, Joshua Halsey, announced in March of 2021 that he would be departing in August. Deputy Director Krystal Starwich is acting as Interim Executive Director during the search process and transition to a new agency head.

The four candidates will participate in virtual interviews with Commissioners during a special meeting on September 2, 2021. While the special meeting is subject to the Open Public Meetings Act, the interviews themselves will be held in an Executive Session.

**About Washington State’s Charter School Commission**

Washington State’s Charter School Commission was formed with the mission of creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process and to hold charter public schools accountable to high standards of quality. The Commission is an independent state agency that exists to authorize and oversee high quality public charter schools throughout Washington with an emphasis on schools designed to expand opportunities for at-risk students, providing leadership and oversight that is consistent with national principles and standards of charter school authorizers and the provisions of Washington’s charter school law.

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