SELECTING THE COMMITTEE

The task of selecting the right committee and most importantly the right chair for you is not a small one. It is perhaps one of the important decisions you will take in your doctoral journey. There are two aspects of this: (1) the rules and regulations from Franklin University, and (2) the search for the chair and committee members.

*The Rules and Regulations from Franklin University*

The composition of a committee starts with a long list of faculty who are qualified to do so. At some point during your studies, you will be presented with this list or you can at any time contact doctoral studies at doctoralresearch@franklin.edu and ask for this comprehensive list of faculty. The rules are straightforward. Each committee has one chair, one methodologist, and one field expert. In other words there is one chair and two committee members. Both the methodologist and the field expert are committee members. It is often the case that the same faculty may be the chair for one committee, but a member for another committee. Faculty can play multiple roles, but they play only one such role for your committee. The comprehensive list provided by the doctoral studies divide faculty in these categories and if you are familiar with the list, you can see how some faculty may appear in twice or thrice in the list. The rules and responsibilities is the easy task. The more complicated one is the selection of your chair and committee members.

*The Search for a Committee*

It all starts with finding the right chair for you. It is in a sense easier to find the committee members once you have established who will be the chair. You may start with the list provided by the doctoral studies and circle out those faculty who may seem like a good fit in paper. Alternatively, you may have taken a course with a professor or another and you truly like a specific faculty and would like to ask them to become your chair. Keep in mind that teaching a course is different from chairing a committee and the expectations of each faculty change from one person to another. It is important to be aware of these things prior of selecting a faculty to become a chair. It is highly advisable that you actually contact the person you are interested in serving in your committee and have a candid conversation before making your decision. What are some qualities that this person should and needs to have? Well, the answer is very personal and starts with asking yourself about your study, and your doctoral journey, as well as personality traits. For example, you may be interested in someone who can guide you on publishing articles and showing you the ropes on how to get an academic job in the future, or you may be more interested in someone who can guide you towards a professional field instead. On other characteristics, you may be more inclined to work with people who are professional and personal at the same time and treat you as a colleague, or you may work better with someone who keeps his/her distance in this relationship. The key word here is “relationship”. This is a strong relationship that you will have with this faculty and you truly need to consider a number of things. Someone who is an excellent writer and expects very high quality of writing may work best for you if you are trying to improve in that area, while for someone who is a confident writer, someone who provides general feedback but does not go into the depth of your writing and editing may be the best choice. Finally, there are personality traits that make one person a better fit rather than another. You may have picked some of those during the course, if this faculty taught a course you took, but you may also not be aware of any of these aspects.

Once you have circled a few potential candidates who could become your chair, contact them via email and set up appointments to discuss. You would want to ask them about the journey, their expectations, and how they work. Think of it as you are interviewing them. Do not commit over the first conversation, but rather go over a few faculty to know that you have made the right selection. Obviously, these people need to come from the list of qualifications and they need to be available to serve in your committee. It makes a big difference between a dissertation chair that you have a great relationship and one that may be choppy.

Now, that you have a chair, that could be your starting point for selecting the rest of your committee. You could ask the chair for suggestions, or you may go back to the list and see who else would be a great fit. Follow the same procedures for committee members. They are an important addition to your dissertation journey and selecting the right committee for you, will determine a lot about the journey itself.