TOP FIVE TAKEAWAYS

- **Ensuring a Diverse Candidate Pool** – Boards cannot expect a search firm, if they choose to work with one, to be solely responsible for ensuring a diverse candidate pool. The work to attract, recruit, and ensure diversity must be the shared collaborative work of the search committee and the search consultant with strong support from the Board of Trustees. Also, to ensure a diverse pool of candidates, the search committee itself must also be diverse.

- **Defining Diversity** – Diversity can include racial and ethnic make-up, gender, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, professional expertise, career path, and more. Diversity of thought is also an important consideration as well.

- **Identifying Bias** - People are naturally inclined toward many behavioral biases. Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman in his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* details the prejudices in human decision making and the illusion of objectivity that pervades our thinking, which may in fact be a group’s collective judgement. This flawed decision making is sometimes evident in the work of independent school search committees. Search committees must educate themselves on decision-making bias and address these issues in the search process.

- **Recognizing Common Search Biases** – *Deficit Hiring Bias* occurs when the search committee identifies attributes or weaknesses in the current head and then assigns these unwarranted weight in the selection of the new head. *Halo Bias* occurs when the search committee believes that a candidate from another prestigious independent school is a powerful proxy for all of the candidate’s attributes and skills. Finally, *Beauty Contest Bias* occurs when the search committee believes a certain candidate truly understands the school based on an initial interview. Understanding these biases can help search committees better vet potential candidates and make more informed decisions.

- **Overcoming Bias** – First, search committees should be open-minded about non-traditional paths to leadership. Second, they should be open and transparent about the school’s cultural expectations. Three, they should continually share and question assumptions made about potential candidates. And lastly, search committees should receive training on implicit bias and cultural competency to ensure the whole team works honestly and collaboratively.