In Their Own Words

Volunteer investment committees and part-time CIOs, even with consultants or advisors, are a model the vast majority of large endowments have left behind. Here's what a few of them said when they pivoted and moved away from the committee-based model.

2005 Middlebury College

"We felt the Investure model was best for us as a $700 million endowment… We thought there were advantages to scale [and access to better managers]… That played out in a positive way, better than we could have orchestrated on our own."

Rick Fritz '68, chairman of Middlebury's board of trustees and former head of private equity and venture capital at BancBoston Capital, on manager access through the outsourced CIO during the 2009 downturn: private equity partners taking a call from a $6 billion consortium, a call a $700 million endowment could not get on its own.

Institutional Investor, "Middlebury College Benefits From Endowment Consortium Model," Nov. 30, 2009.

2006 Williams College

"The volume and complexity of overseeing an increasingly large portfolio, however, rendered that model unsustainable."

Williams College, announcing its first chief investment officer. Until then the endowment, then roughly $1.5 billion, had been "managed on a volunteer basis by the Finance Committee of the college's Board of Trustees." President Morton Owen Schapiro said Williams would "for the first time have an experienced professional overseeing on a day-to-day basis an operation of great importance to all that we do at the college."

Williams College announcement, "Collette Chilton Named Chief Investment Officer," Aug. 16, 2006.

2007 Lehigh University

"With the complexity of the market and the amount of oversight necessary to deal with existing managers, as well as keep up with the growing number of strategies and possibilities in the marketplace, we could no longer rely on a volunteer committee."

R. Charles Tschampion, chair of Lehigh's investment committee and a former senior executive at GM Investment Management, on why the committee that had run the endowment for a quarter century hired its first full-time investment professional as assets approached $1 billion.

Institutional Investor, "Making the Grade," Aug. 14, 2007.

2015 Michigan State University

"The endowment has grown significantly over the last decade and so has the complexity of managing the investments."

Philip Zecher, MSU's inaugural CIO. The university's announcement states that the new role "will replace some functions previously performed by the investment advisory subcommittee of the Board of Trustees, MSU's Vice President for Finance, and investment consultant Cambridge Associates." Zecher had served on that subcommittee from 2011 to 2014.

Michigan State University announcement, Dec. 2015.

2020 Mount Holyoke College

"The decision to hire a CIO was a strategic move in recognition that markets have become more complex and competitive. Having a dedicated, full-time CIO watching over this significant asset of Mount Holyoke College 24/7 is in the best interest of the College generationally."

Louise Wasso '75, chair of the investment committee and a Managing Director at Angelo, Gordon & Co., announcing the college's first CIO after a national search. The hire, Ana Yankova '97, came from Cambridge Associates and had earlier been a senior financial analyst at the Yale University investment office. Her office was sited in Boston.

Mount Holyoke College news release, "Mount Holyoke names Chief Investment Officer," March 30, 2020.