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Pitch in!

Oregon State Board seeks new chancellor

The process to replace Chancellor Joe Cox after his retirement will entail many steps in the coming year

By Eric Martin

Oregon Daily Emerald

An executive committee and search firm will soon begin trolling for a successor to the Oregon State Board of Higher Education chancellor. By casting a net nationwide, they hope to entice the best candidate available to preside on the governing body of Oregon's seven public universities.

Chancellor Joe Cox announced July 17 his intention to retire by spring 2002, citing personal reasons and health concerns. He suffered a heart attack Sept. 8. Cox returned to work full-time one month later and has assisted in the search for his successor.

The search firm, which could be one of 12 national or two Oregon-based firms, will work in tandem with the executive committee to locate candidates nationwide that meet credentials specified by the committee. Search firms are selected based on cost and resources.

Cox, who has served as chancellor since 1994, said the initial pool of candidates could easily exceed 100 people.

"It's a process similar, and yet different, to selecting a president," Cox said. "The chancellor has a narrower set of constituencies."

Sometime in February, the search firm will arrange a meeting with the executive committee to review qualified candidates. That pool, which will also consist of candidates contacted by the committee, will be trimmed to roughly 30.

"Let's say in mid-February the search firm has narrowed beyond the list of 30 or 25 to the top 10 to 15," Cox said. "At that time the search firm will do in depth reference and background checking, and we'll have a full dossier on all the major candidates.

"Then it gets difficult."

The executive committee then will pare the pool to six or eight by reviewing the dossiers, making calls to the candidates and discussing credentials in meetings.

"Those, if they remain interested, will be brought to Oregon to meet the executive committee and the university presidents," Cox said. "Then, the executive committee will bring the pool down to the finalists; I'd guess anywhere from three to five."

Those candidates will then make presentations to a body of students, faculty, lawmakers, business representatives and others. The candidates will be asked to elaborate on their plans for guiding the university system

through the next 10 years.

"There's a question-and-answer session with the audience," Cox said, "but the board members are also interested in seeing how the chemistry goes. How do they do on their feet? How is the audience reacting?"

The full state board of higher education then meets to finalize the decision.

Tim Young, a student member of the board, said he understands the selection process must be expeditious, but is concerned that student and faculty input doesn't register until the majority of candidates have been screened.

"It's crucial — crucial — that faculty and students have a voice in this decision," said Young, a University political science major.

"When you have a presidential search committee, it consists of faculty, staff and the community. For the chancellor, it's just the excutive committee. I think there needs to be greater access, and I don't think that's happening right now. It's definitely left the board open to criticism."

Erin Watari student board member Southern Oregon University

Cox said that he has issued emails to faculty and students requesting they list the qualities they believe a chancellor must possess, and that those comments are passed to executive committee members.

The other student member of the state board, Erin Watari, also has been critical of the selection process because she says people of color are not represented on the executive committee.

"I think that's one of the issues," said Watari, a political science major at Southern Oregon University in Ashland. "But there is a whole bigger issue on representation. When you have a presidential search committee, it consists of faculty, staff and the community. For the chancellor, it's just the executive committee. I think there needs to be greater access, and I don't think that's happening right now. It's definitely left the board open to criticism."

Eric Martin is a higher education reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald. He can be reached at ericmartin@dailyemerald.com.

News brief

Women's Center reaches out to nontraditional students

The Women's Center is sponsoring its first "Women in Transition" meeting for nontraditional students today. Organizers plan to conduct a series of similar meetings throughout the year.

The meetings are meant to help older students, student parents, returning students and transfer students make friends and get information, according to the Women's Center.

Jamuna Golden, Women's Center office assistant, said the meetings will provide a support group for nontraditional students and will turn into whatever the group's participants want. Future meetings of "Women in Transition" will be planned later.

Today's meeting will be in the Umpqua River Room in the EMU from 1 to 2 p.m. For more information, students can call Sayaka Mimura at 346-4095.

— Anna Seeley