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Knight: Nike to keep relationship with UO

Continued from page 1A

products, since 1996. Perez has managed country, regional and worldwide operations and has overseen multiple brands, according to a Nike press release.

"This begins an exciting new chapter in Nike's ongoing business evolution," Knight said in the press release. "Bill is a highly regarded and deeply talented leader with more than 30 years experience as a builder of global brands and businesses. ... He also knows how to operate a highly socially responsible global business, all of which make him the right person to lead Nike, Inc."

University President Dave Frohn-mayer said the University has always had a "robust" relationship with Nike, adding that the change in leadership would not affect Nike's relationship with the University.

"I wouldn't anticipate any reason why this change in his corporate position would have any effect on his relationship with the University," he told the Emerald. "He is one of our most illustrious graduates and ... he and his wife Penny have been our most generous donors to both the academic and athletic enterprises of

the University."

He said the change was "neither a surprise, nor a disruption," noting that Knight will still be "holding onto the reigns" because he will retain his position as chairman.

"It looks to be a very straightforward, organic shift in responsibilities and the product of a long and careful international search," Frohn-mayer said.

Frohn-mayer added that the shift would not negatively affect the corporation.

"The company has been remarkably successful in the past year and a half in terms of its market position and its shareholder vitality," Frohn-mayer said. "Obviously they're looking to have deliberately searched for someone who is a seasoned CEO of an international, competitive company in the retail field."

Scott Reames, a spokesman for Nike, said Nike will retain Knight's expertise while gaining Perez's experience.

"He'll still have a tremendous influence on the overall company," he said.

Reames said Knight approached the board in early 2003 and asked it to look for a replacement.

He added that Knight's experience as an athlete may have contributed to his wanting to transfer power while Nike is successful.

"I think the thought of going out on top appeals to him," he said. "He's a very competitive man. He's clearly spent his entire adult life building Nike, so it was not a decision that was made capriciously."

"It's really hard to tell what his life will be like after Dec. 28."

Perez, who has worn only Nikes for the past 27 years, received his B.A. in government from Cornell University and a graduate degree from the American Graduate School of International Management. The avid runner said he is honored to run Nike.

"I was drawn to this company because the Nike brand perpetually stays current, making it one of the best managed on the globe," he said in the Nike press release. "You can feel the innovative spirit that Phil and his team inspires from product design to retail to athlete partnerships. And I'm a strong believer in 'Just Do It.'"

Knight, 66, graduated from the University in 1959 with a degree in accounting, and later earned an MBA from Stanford. An accomplished track athlete during his college years, Knight teamed up with the University's renowned track coach Bill Bowerman to form Blue Ribbon Sports in the early 1960s. The company had humble beginnings, with Knight distributing athletic shoes imported from Japan from his father's basement and the back of his car.

The company later changed its name to Nike in 1972, marking the start of a sports-apparel powerhouse. Its legendary "swoosh" is recognizable around the world and Nike products are available in nearly 200 countries.

parkerhowell@dailyemerald.com

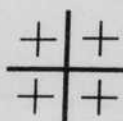
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