

# PRESIDENTIAL WOES

The effects of UO president Gottfredson's swift exit

When the abruptly former UO president Michael Gottfredson first took office in 2012, even the university's resident muckraking blogger, economics prof Bill Harbaugh of UO Matters, was hard-pressed to dig up dirt on the unassuming administrator. Barely two years later on Aug. 6, Gottfredson announced he was stepping down immediately, and the next day the UO's new independent governing board voted to give the man, who was giving up the presidency as well as a tenured professorship, a nearly \$1 million buyout.

Gottfredson's resignation in the wake of the UO's struggle to deal with allegations of a sexual assault on a student, and the swift \$940,000 severance he received, has led many to wonder if Gottfredson chose to step down or was forced to, and what the role of faculty governance will be as the school searches for yet another leader. The UO's quest for leadership also demands an answer to the question of whether it is an academic institution or a sports conglomerate.

Gottfredson was following in the footsteps of the independent-minded and controversial Richard Lariviere, who helmed the UO for less than three years before being fired by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education. While Lariviere was easily spotted around campus in his signature hat, Gottfredson was more of a "where's Waldo?"

The only prior scandal Harbaugh was able to unearth was when famed philosopher Jacques Derrida took Gottfredson and other UC-Irvine administrators to task for firing his friend, vampire expert Dragan Kujundzić, who had been accused of sexual harassment.

Now, as Gottfredson steps down with a hefty payout, Harbaugh points out that this is not the first time an administrator recommended by former interim UO president Bob Berdahl has left linked to a possibly expensive buyout. Former University of Hawaii president M.R.C. Greenwood offered to retire in exchange for \$2 million after a controversial period of leadership at that school. She later rescinded the demand, according to media reports that criticized her for letting the school pay



UO MEDIA RELATIONS

\$200,000 for a scam Stevie Wonder concert.

Harbaugh tells *EW* that in Gottfredson's case, "for a modest institution like UO, and for a president who served two very unsuccessful years, \$940K is a lot of money." He says that the chair of the UO's Board of Trustees, Chuck Lillis, "noted it would come from UO Foundation unrestricted funds."

According to the most recent data Harbaugh could find, culled from the fiscal year ending in 2013, "it had the foundation spending \$16 million on scholarships, of which about \$9 million is for athletes. So Gottfredson got about 10 percent of what the foundation spends on academic scholarships in one year."

Media reports speculating that Gottfredson was forced to step down cite the size of the buyout, the speed of the departure and the "classic" excuse that he wants to spend more time with family, as well as the fact Gottfredson doesn't have another job lined up. When neither Athletic Director Rob Mullens or basketball coach Dana Altman were fired after the sexual assault scandal involving three basketball players, some began to speculate that non-sports-oriented Gottfredson would take the fall.

Provost Scott Coltrane is serving as interim UO president.

For emeritus biology professor Franklin Stahl, a long-time proponent of faculty governance, the furor swirling around the UO presidency is just as much about how the

next leader will be hired as it is about how the last one left.

Stahl, who was recruited by the UO in 1959, says one attraction the school held was its strong system of shared governance. When Stahl, who retired in 2005, started, the entire faculty met on Wednesday afternoons for meetings of the Faculty Assembly (the governing body of the statutory faculty). When it comes to the UO's shared governance, these days the statutory faculty is represented by the Faculty Senate, though Stahl says the Assembly can convene and vote, and its vote supercedes that of the Senate.

The search process that resulted in Gottfredson's hiring was secretive, with no candidates revealed except Gottfredson as the top choice. According to Harbaugh's UO Matters, the Oregon University System board held a secret review of Gottfredson in spring 2013, "and renewed his contract through July 2016, without input from the UO faculty (excepting apparently, a few token insiders)."

Stahl says the UO's Constitution, which Lariviere signed in 2011, is a strong one that clearly calls for shared faculty governance. He and his partner Jette Foss say they will ask the UO Senate to have the search committee send a copy of the UO's Constitution to each of the presidential candidates, and ask them what they think of leading a school with strong faculty involvement in its governance.

Stahl says that Dave Frohnmayer, the president who preceded Lariviere, strongly resisted faculty governance. Frohnmayer previously served as Oregon attorney general and, after leaving the UO, joined the law firm Harrang Long Gary Rudnick in 2009.

Critics of the UO's focus on sports over academics point to Frohnmayer's tenure as president as the turning point from a scholarly mission to a "Go Ducks!" focus. According to an Aug. 8 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "his leadership spurred harsh criticism from some faculty members who blamed him for what they saw as a decline in the university's academic quality."

Harbaugh says he wonders how much the UO might have paid Harrang Long to negotiate Gottfredson's settlement. He alleges, "the Foundation probably paid Sharon Rudnick's fee, to keep it out of the public record." Harbaugh has documented the thousands the UO paid to Harrang Long to bargain with the graduate teaching fellows union this summer on UO Matters.

Stahl says, "If we get the right president we have a bright future." He thinks Oregon can still earn back the tenuous position many predict it is about to lose in the Association of American Universities, an elite group of top research institutions. "I like a good football game," he says. "But I don't like football to run the university." ■

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