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Presidential search forum at UIS receives small turnout

By **CHRIS DETTRO**
THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

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Members of the University of Illinois' presidential search committee hope that e-mail suggestions make up for a lack of public comment at a forum on the search at the University of Illinois Springfield Tuesday.

The forum — the last of three such events at the U of I's three campuses — was designed to give faculty, students, staff and the general public an opportunity to discuss qualities they feel are needed by the university's next president.

But only one member of the public signed up to speak, and just one student and one faculty member asked questions of the four committee members on hand.

"We like as many comments as possible," said U of I trustee Karen Hasara of Springfield, who chaired the forum. "We're hoping the publicity will encourage people to e-mail."

The former mayor led the discussion in the absence of trustee and search committee chairman Pamela Strobel, who couldn't make it because of the weather between Springfield and Chicago. UIS faculty members James Patrick Hall and Tih-Fen Ting, as well as UIS student member Charles Olivier also attended.

About two-thirds of the 15 people in the audience were faculty, with the rest students. The lack of speakers cut the allotted time of two hours to about 30 minutes.

Officials who attended all three forums said that similar meetings at the Urbana campus and the Chicago campus each attracted about 100 people.

Jack Watson, former president of The Franklin and a longtime U of I supporter, was the lone speaker before the committee.

B. Joseph White resigned as U of I president in September, effective Dec. 31, after reports that the school admitted politically connected applicants over more qualified ones at its Urbana-Champaign campus. Former U of I president Stanley Ikenberry will serve as interim president until the board names a successor.

"Maybe the administration took it (the admissions scandal) too lightly. It came as a shock to many people, including me," said Watson, who has raised funds for the university since the 1950s.

Watson said the 19-member committee has to find "someone with terrific ethics and perfect integrity who is not going to play favorites." He also said the next president should be "a little more outgoing, personable and visible" than was White.

"I'd hope we'd see someone who pays more attention to the store, and stays on campus more than he's out raising funds," Watson said.

Watson also suggested the next president should have a long-range plan for academics and athletics and look at the whole direction of athletics at the Urbana campus.

"We have the best chance for a new glory era for the University of Illinois right now," Watson said. "We're starting all over with a new president and a new chancellor coming in. Change can be very, very good."

Hasara said the committee has had two meetings and is finalizing a "white paper" that will discuss the strengths of the university's three campuses and the qualities looked for in a candidate.

Ting said the white paper will be a public document available on the U of I Web site and will lay out specific qualifications the committee seeks.

As for e-mail comments, "We'd like to hear from you what you think would put UIS on the map," she said.

Bill Kline, an assistant professor of liberal and integrative studies, said UIS has a niche as a small, liberal arts campus and is "a shining star nationally in online education and should remain so." He said the next president should appreciate the value of online education.

Hasara said the trustees will begin advertising "very shortly" for candidates and that the search will be national in scope.

"Our next meeting is in February, and we'll be putting on a hard press between now and then," she said.

The university's goal is to have a new president in place by July 1, or at the latest when the 2010 fall semester begins.

Chris Dettro can be reached at 788-1510.

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3 hours ago

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Looks like the UIS faculty are finally understanding what the UIUC faculty already know, that their input counts for squat these days to their 'leaders'. Maybe they are finally engaging in activities like research that serve THEIR OWN self interests rather than the hegemonic games of administrators.

denmac

2 hours ago

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'liberal and integrative studies'. Exactly what does that entail?

Mark Observed

2 hours ago

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My question is what about the support staff that kept this program going???? This program existed before White got there and it will keep going under a different guise in the future unless the support staff is dealt with. They give special treatment to athletes and children of alumni. Is that any different????

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