

THE BOARD OF REGENTS
OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Montana University System

SPECIAL MEETING

MINUTES

DATE: APRIL 14, 1993

LOCATION: MONTANA HIGHER EDUCATION BUILDING
CONFERENCE ROOM 102A
2500 BROADWAY
HELENA, MONTANA

REGENTS PRESENT: BILL MATHERS (CHAIRMAN), JIM KAZE (VICE CHAIRMAN), TRAVIS BELCHER, PAUL BOYLAN, CORDELL JOHNSON, KERMIT SCHWANKE, AND TOM TOPEL; COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION JOHN HUTCHINSON

REGENTS ABSENT: NONE

Chairman Bill Mathers called the special meeting of the Board of Regents to order at 10:00 a.m. A roll call showed that a quorum was present.

Chairman Mathers said the Board was meeting specifically to discuss how to proceed with hiring a new commissioner and possibly naming an interim replacement. (Commissioner of Higher Education John Hutchinson's resignation is effective July 1, 1993). Chairman Mathers said Commissioner Hutchinson would outline the Board's options, and the members would then meet in executive session. Because they would be discussing potential candidates for the job, the session would be closed to the public and the media. If the Board members were to decide on a replacement that day, they would reconvene and make the announcement publicly.

Commissioner Hutchinson reviewed two personnel policies the Board could use in deciding how to proceed: Board policies 406.0, Vacancies and Promotions; and 709.1, Promotion to Commissioner's Staff. He said they could decide to appoint an interim replacement or hire a new commissioner from within the University System or the Commissioner's Office; they could appoint or hire someone from outside the System; or they could conduct a national search. Hutchinson said the Board was also free to explore any other options he hadn't mentioned.

Chairman Mathers asked the Board members how they wanted to proceed.

Regent Kermit Schwanke cautioned the Board not to make a hasty decision. He suggested they take their time because of the position's importance and recommended proceeding with that in mind.

Regent Paul Boylan asked about the financial status of the Commissioner's Office as the result of legislative actions.

Commissioner Hutchinson said his office had lost a biennial amount of about \$200,000, and he didn't anticipate further major cuts.

Regent Jim Kaze asked how much a national search would cost—based on past experience.

Commissioner Hutchinson said it depended on the number of candidates brought in for interviews. He said if the Board interviewed three out-of-state candidates and also considered advertising and office costs, the cost would probably range from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Regent Tom Topel asked what the chances were of getting a pool of good candidates, considering the problems higher education in Montana was experiencing during this legislative session. He said he didn't think they should go through the effort of conducting a national search if they wouldn't get qualified candidates.

Commissioner Hutchinson said there was no question that "the word was out on Montana." Through *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and other sources, other states were aware of higher education's funding problems in Montana. Hutchinson acknowledged that fewer candidates would likely apply for the job, and the overall qualifications would not be as strong as usual. He pointed out they would still receive applications from qualified people, however.

Regent Topel asked how long it would take for the problematic "atmosphere" in Montana to turn around.

Commissioner Hutchinson said it would probably take at least one more legislative session. He said the structural study of the University System due to the Board October 1, 1993, also would play an important role.

Regent Kaze asked what time of year would be best to conduct a national search.

Commissioner Hutchinson said because of contracts already signed for next year, the best time to begin a search would be either late summer or early fall, and a new commissioner could possibly take over by July 1994.

Because of the time and money involved, Regent Schwanke said he would oppose a national search unless absolutely necessary.

Chairman Mathers cautioned the Board not to rule anything out and to explore all possibilities.

Regent Cordell Johnson said they shouldn't assume that anything would improve after the next legislative session—things would likely get worse. He also agreed they should take their time in either appointing an interim replacement or hiring a new commissioner.

Regent Topel referred to the structural study of the University System due to the Board in October. He said because of the study's importance they needed someone in the commissioner's position who could take charge and lead that study.

Regent Johnson agreed that the study would play a significant role in the System's future and that some long-term decisions would result after its completion.

Commissioner Hutchinson suggested that if the Board decided to conduct a national search they should begin no later than September in order to have someone on board by July 1994. That would give the new commissioner time to prepare for the 1995 legislative session.

Regent Kaze felt they should focus on appointing an interim replacement and defer hiring a new commissioner until fall.

Regent Belcher pointed out that the interim replacement could end up being hired as the new commissioner.

Regent Topel agreed and said they needed to be careful in that regard. They didn't want to create an impression nationally that only Montanans were hired when national searches were conducted. He said the interim replacement shouldn't be a candidate if the Board decides to conduct a national search. The Board should be willing to appoint the interim replacement as permanent or otherwise do a national search. Regent Topel said they should also consider as serious candidates people who had not spent their entire professional careers in higher education.

Commissioner Hutchinson said most of the applicants would have a higher education background. For the commissioner's job in particular, a lack of extensive campus experience may not be as critical as it would for a college presidency. He said a candidate's understanding of higher education, however, was critical for the job.

After further discussion, Chairman Mathers said the Board would proceed at that time with trying to appoint an interim replacement and delay the search for a

permanent commissioner. He pointed out, however, that the Board would also consider the other options presented during the meeting.

At 10:30 a.m., Chairman Mathers adjourned the meeting and said the Board would reconvene in an executive session that would be closed to the public and the media.

The Board members met in executive session until 12:00 noon and adjourned for lunch. They reconvened at 1:15 p.m. in executive session and adjourned at 2:00 p.m. without making any public announcement.