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[Home](#) > [News](#) > [Local](#) > UI trustees OK search firm for finding successor to Easter

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University of Illinois trustees on Wednesday approved the hiring of a search firm to assist them in finding the next president.

SPRINGFIELD — University of Illinois trustees on Wednesday approved the hiring of a search firm to assist them in finding the next president.

Parker Executive Search of Atlanta will work with a committee of trustees, faculty and other employees in identifying and recruiting potential candidates to replace President Robert Easter, who is expected to retire next year.

The university has used Parker on several occasions recently, including the current search for a Chicago chancellor and the searches that led to the hiring of basketball coach John Groce and athletic director Mike Thomas.

Trustees did not approve a specific amount for Parker's contract. The last time the university conducted a search for a president was in 2010 when it hired Michael Hogan. That year, the university paid search firm Isaacson Miller \$160,000 to help recruit and screen candidates.

In addition to recruiting candidates and reviewing their background information for the presidential search, Parker will offer logistical assistance to the committee charged with hiring the next president, according to the UI. That committee is being co-chaired by trustee Pam Strobel, a member of the board's executive committee, and Douglas Beck, a physics professor from the Urbana campus. There are 19 people on the search committee, including trustees, faculty, students and staff, plus representatives from the UI Foundation and UI Alumni Association.

Easter's term is expected to end on June 30, 2015. Board members have said they hope to name a new president by January of that year to allow for some transition time.

Sections (2): [News](#) [2], [Local](#) [3]

Topics (2): [Politics and Government](#) [4], [University of Illinois](#) [5]
