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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

# Presidential search starts with pledges for secrecy

19 panel members asked to sign deals on confidentiality

**By JULIE WURTH**  
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A University of Illinois presidential search committee convened its first public session Monday, but one of the key messages was confidentiality.

The 19 members of a search committee charged with finding a successor to UI President Bob



**At news-gazette.com:** Read the confidentiality agreement members of the UI's presidential search committee were asked to sign Monday.

Easter were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement and take other measures to ensure no candidates' names are leaked.

Members were asked not to refer to or discuss any potential candidates through email but rather forward names by telephone to the committee co-chairs, UI trustee Pamela Strobel and physics Professor

Douglas Beck.

The panel's work will be coordinated through a secure website set up by Parker Executive Search of Atlanta, the consulting firm hired last week by UI trustees to recruit and screen candidates and provide logistical support.

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# SEARCH

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The search will be closed until one finalist is chosen as the next president, and "other names must be held in strict confidence forever," according to a committee document.

"To find the best person in the country, we're going to be looking at people. We can't jeopardize those folks. We're only going to pick one," Beck told the panel, which includes trustees, faculty, students and staff, plus representatives from the UI Foundation and UI Alumni Association.

A tentative timeline calls for the committee to interview about 15 semifinalists in September, choose eight to 10 names to pass along to trustees, conduct finalist interviews in October and possibly announce a selection in December. Strobel said that timeline could change given the number of interviews to be conducted and logistical demands of a Chicago chancellor's search that is also underway.

Easter plans to step down by July 1, 2015.

In the meantime, three town-hall meetings are planned next month to get input from students, faculty, staff and alumni of the UI's three campuses: June 23 in Springfield, June 24 in Chicago and June 25 in Urbana. Details will be announced later.

The panel has scheduled its next meeting for July 11 in Chicago, where members will review that input and meet with Easter. Committee members also plan to meet with targeted groups, including the chancellors, deans and alumni from the three campuses.

The committee will look for a president with "outstanding academic credentials" and proven accomplishments as a leader and candidates from under-represented groups.

The next president ideally would be a professor with strong academic credentials, given that the position has so much interaction with faculty under the university's shared-governance model, Strobel said.

Several UI officials urged stepped-up efforts to recruit women and minorities for the post to meet equal-opportunity regulations and the UI's

## Save the dates

The tentative timeline discussed Monday for the search for the next University of Illinois president:

■ **Next week:** "White paper," or position description, finalized.

■ **June 23-25:** Town-hall meetings for search committee to gather input from UI's three campuses.

■ **July 11:** Committee meets with President Bob Easter.

■ **September:** Interviews with about 15 semifinalists.

■ **October:** Eight to 10 finalists selected.

■ **December:** Decision announced.

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diversity and affirmative-action guidelines.

The committee has to "cast the net as widely as we can," Beck said. "We have to look at the rising stars," candidates who might be younger than usual or further down the leadership chain who have shown "unusual leadership abilities," he said.

"You take a little more risk there," Strobel said, but there are plenty of examples of lesser-known candidates who turned out to be a "superstar."

Strobel and Beck also emphasized the importance of a diverse committee that will bring varied experiences and viewpoints to the table.

"The best thing you can do ... is not hold back," Strobel said. "Express your views, bring what you believe to the table."

Currently, about 6 percent of the 40 positions in the university's executive administration are from under-represented groups, well under the UI's goal of 11 percent, said Jami Painter, assistant vice president for human relations.

Female chancellors now head all three UI campuses, but the presidency has never been held by a woman or minority.

"You want the best candidate — and half the population is women," noted committee member Roy Campbell, computer science professor and chairman of the Senate Executive Committee at the Urbana campus.

Trustees have pledged to rely more on faculty input and less on an outside search firm than they did in 2010.

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**UI PROFESSOR  
DOUGLAS BECK**

search committee co-chair

Parker Executive Vice President Laurie Wilder told the panel Monday that consultants won't eliminate applicants with less-than-impressive credentials because the search firm doesn't have a vote on the committee.

"We are not here to select your next president," she said.

Wilder said the committee likely will wind up with 15 to 18 serious semifinalists, no matter how many applications it receives.

"The first 10 people who apply, I can tell you who they are because they apply for everything," Wilder said. "These are very difficult searches, and the pools are not nearly as broad as you think they are."

Officials did not release the amount of the contract with Parker, saying the details have not been finalized. The university paid search firm Isaacson Miller \$160,000 to help with the 2010 presidential search, which led to the hiring of Michael Hogan.

Before voting to go into closed session Monday, the committee also reviewed a draft of a "white paper," or position description, which it hopes to finalize next week.

Professor Nicholas Burbules said the current draft is an improvement over the one used in the 2010 search, which he said ascribed broader powers to the president. The new version makes clear that the chancellors are the heads of the campuses and work with the president, he said.

"We don't want to make the same mistakes we've made in the past," said Burbules, who led faculty opposition to Hogan's efforts to centralize more authority in the president's office.