

## Presidential Search Committee looks for the new face of the University of Illinois

By Corinne Ruff | News editor | Posted: Monday, October 27, 2014 9:45 pm

The University of Illinois is looking for a new kind of president.

"We think the job of the president is evolving," said Douglas Beck, co-chair of the Presidential Search Committee and professor in Physics.

Beck is one of 19 individuals currently reviewing candidates for the next University of Illinois president, who will take over the position on July 1, 2015, when Robert Easter retires at the end of his contract.

Members of the committee, including faculty, students and members of the Board of Trustees, met in Chicago Wednesday and Thursday for back-to-back meetings to continue narrowing the list of potential candidates. Beck declined to state how many candidates were currently under consideration.

"A number of candidates are interested in the position, and they have been selected so far as we have been narrowing things down based on this idea of the fit both from their point of view," Beck said. "Some people would find this kind of role not so suited to what they are good at, but others do, and so it's really a fit for us and a fit for them."

As the committee sifts through the long list, Beck said the most important thing to consider is the shift in the president's role to serve as more of the face of the University.

"We expect the president to be able to be effective in talking with the state legislature and others in state government, but also we would like the president to really represent the University in all of the constituencies in the state of Illinois — the business community, civic institutions and cultural institutions all over the state," Beck said.

The committee started its search this summer with a list of over 200 names nominated by individuals, although Beck said not all nominees are being considered.

The committee's criteria come from a "white paper" listed on its website, Beck said, which lays out an updated job description of the president's position.

Beck said changes have been made to the description to place more of an emphasis on a president that has "a leadership style built on collaboration, openness and the ability to inspire others by articulating a vision for the future."

Due to past controversy in the position, notably with Joseph White and Michael Hogan, the committee is taking extra precaution to vet the names of the candidates, said Thomas Hardy, University spokesperson.

"I think the co-chairs have said there is going to be exceptional care and probing taken in reviewing the candidates for this position," Hardy said. "They are looking for the best person in the country for this position."

Members of the committee, such as Nicholas Burbules, professor in Education, are taking past presidential mistakes into consideration while reviewing the candidates.

Burbules said the new job description will help the president to become more of a face of the University, who will gain state support rather than administer over the decisions of each campus' chancellors.

"One of Hogan's favorite phrases was 'chain of command' like a military model — the generals tell the colonel what to do," he said. "I think that top-down management system doesn't work for us."

Beck said the new president will be expected to work both internally and externally to uphold the different priorities and values of the Chicago, Springfield and Urbana-Champaign campuses.

"I think the president first and foremost has to recognize that the three campuses have different roles, histories, cultures," Beck said. "We really are able to provide a pretty wide range of options for students in the state."

Beck said the committee will likely select the finalists, who will be recommend to the Board of Trustees by the end of November. However, that schedule is subject to the sensitivity of the candidates, he said, many of whom already have senior positions in university administration.

"We want the best person," he said. "We don't necessarily need that at a particular time."

Beck said the committee has no plans to release a list of names for community discussion and that the decision will be made privately between the committee and the Board of Trustees.

The committee will meet again through a video conference call Monday to continue its discussion and further narrow its recommendations for the position.

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*Editor's note: A previous version of this article incorrectly stated that University Spokesman Thomas Hardy identified former University of Illinois presidents Joseph White and Michael Hogan as corrupt. Both were subject to controversy during their time as presidents, however, did not conduct illegal actions of corruption. The Daily Illini regrets the error.*