
From: Gartner, Michael [MichaelG@iowacubs.com]

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To: bobd@meardonlaw.com; bonnie campbell; craig lang; dave miles; jack evans; Jenny Rokes; vasquez.rose@principal.com; Ruth Harkin

Cc: Geoffroy, Gregory L [PRES]; Baumert, Andy [GOV R]; Ben Allen; sally-mason@uiowa.edu; JPrickett@iadeaf.k12.ia.us; jschild@iowa-braille.k12.ia.us

Colleagues –

At the end of the Board of Regents meeting tomorrow, I intend to propose that we elect a new president of the Board, effective January 1. Here is my reasoning:

As you know, I twice have been elected president, and my current two-year term ends in the spring. As you also know, I do not intend to seek an additional term. That being the case, I think it is best to elect a new president before the Legislature gets into high gear and before the Board chooses a new Executive Director. The president of the Board must register as a lobbyist and usually spends quite a bit of time on Capitol Hill meeting with legislators, testifying, and trying to help shepherd the Board's agenda through the legislative process. To change leaders midway through this process could be confusing to those we deal with and detrimental to our goals. Similarly, while I don't know how soon we will be hiring a new Executive Director, I hope it will be done with all deliberate speed. Again, I think she or he should come into the job with a clear understanding of who the president will be for the next two years and not have to quickly adapt to a change in leadership styles. The president and the executive director must work extremely closely with one another – there are issues big and small that must be dealt with every day – and it will be difficult enough for a new person to master the situation without the added complication of a change in leadership.

Finally, as chairman of Vision Iowa and then president of the Board of Regents, I have spent much of the past eight springs on Capitol Hill, and this year I'd like instead to spend some of that time with my wife in Maui and with my colleagues at spring training. With all due respect to my friends in the Legislature, my wife and Maui and spring training are more appealing to me. I am grateful to Gov. Tom Vilsack for appointing me chairman of Vision Iowa and then appointing me to the Board of Regents, and I am grateful to you for electing me president. But I will be 70 years old this year, and I think that that is another reason for a transition of Board leadership.

I am quite proud of the accomplishments of the Board in the past three years – the hiring of two excellent presidents and a wonderful Executive Director, the securing of full funding from the Legislature and tens of millions of dollars for capital spending, the seamless combining of radio stations and the launch of Iowa Public Radio, the implementation of a strong internal-auditing system, the enormous success of economic-development initiatives on all three campuses, the strategic refocusing of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School, the renewed strong working relationships with AFSCME and with student leaders, the coordination of legislative agendas and proposals among the three universities, the securing of funding for a new State Hygenics Lab, and, of course, the continued emphasis on students and strong education at all the Regents institutions.

My term on the board has three years to run, and I look forward to working with whomever you elect as president.

Best,

Michael