

## MOREHEAD'S BID TO PICK PRESIDENT STILL ON TRACK - BUT PROSPECT OF DERAILMENT BY SOME ON BOARD OF REGENTS IS GROWING



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Morehead State University's search for a new president is, for the moment, still on track.

But with the Eastern Kentucky school's board of regents scheduled to meet in two weeks to interview the five finalists recommended by a search committee, the prospect of a derailment is looming larger.

The first tremor in the selection process surfaced Tuesday when a new regent, T.T. Colley of Pikeville, said he and four others on the 10-member board might block the hiring of a new president.

Colley, appointed in August by former Gov. Wallace Wilkinson, said he felt "misled" because he said the board had promised to provide nine or 10 finalists. "I want to see more names," he said.

At the same time, at least three other regents -- Lois Baker of Whitesburg; Walter Carr of Morehead; and Helen Pennington of West Liberty -- have since said they were disappointed that no Kentuckians were among the finalists.

A fifth regent, student Tim Francis of Bardstown, a search-panel member, also has expressed displeasure with the search process.

If the selection process breaks down, Morehead's search for its 12th president could go anywhere -- including back to a long list of applicants.

Board Chairman William R. Seaton of Ashland and faculty regent Alban Wheeler said yesterday they were still optimistic the board would select one of the five recommended applicants.

"At this stage, anyone who has the best interests of the university at heart will want to see one of these people appointed," Wheeler said. "The (search) committee, I think, conducted the most professional, the cleanest search you could ever want. It would be tragic if someone torpedoed it."

But Colley said Tuesday that the selection committee's work was over. He said Morehead's regents were not required to choose the school's next president

from the search committee's five finalists.

In a news release, Seaton appeared to dispute Colley's claim that the Pikeville regent had been misled.

Seaton said the regents decided in May to accept at least six recommendations from the search committee. On Nov. 22 -- after Colley and two other regents joined the board -- it adopted a resolution suggesting that the search committee "strongly consider" expanding the number of finalists from six to 10, he said.

But Seaton, a search-committee member, said the panel later responded in a "thoughtful" written response that "it would be unwise and counterproductive" to increase the number of recommended finalists.

Colley, Baker and Pennington said they would vote for one of the five recommended applicants after interviewing them Jan. 24 and 25 in Lexington if they think the applicant is qualified.

"However, I will not vote for one of those five if I don't feel they're

qualified," Baker said yesterday. "I mean, are we trying to pick the best president for Morehead University here or are we just trying to make someone feel good about themselves?"

About 175 people initially applied or were nominated last year to replace Morehead's 11th president, C. Nelson Grote, who will retire June 30. His successor will be named in March and take office July 1.

The selection panel recommended these finalists in December:

G. Edward Hughes, 41, a native of Gettysburg, Pa., who is president of Hazard Community College; Joseph Alexander, 44, dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Oklahoma State University; Ronnie Davis, 51, dean of the University of New Orleans' College of Business Administration; Ronald Eaglin, 51, chancellor of the University of South Carolina's Coastal Carolina College at Conway; and Alan Gould, 53, senior vice president at Marshall University in Huntington, W.Va.

Colley, an influential Pike County politician, denied attempting to resurrect the candidacy of any applicant who might have been eliminated.

However, board Vice Chairman Wayne Martin of Lexington said there were "some extreme pressures attempted to be placed on the committee on behalf of at least two (unsuccessful) candidates. Not all of that pressure was unprofessional or improper, but some of it was."

No other regents reported such pressure, but Colley, Baker, Pennington and Carr said they had hoped for a nominee from Kentucky.

At least one Kentuckian, former University of Kentucky Vice President Raymond Hornback, a former

Morehead official, was reported to be among nine finalists in one newspaper report before the selection panel's recommendations were announced.

Former Superintendent of Public Instruction John Brock, a former Rowan County superintendent, declined yesterday to confirm or deny that he applied for the job. Former state official Richard Robinson of Lexington, a Morehead graduate, was not available for comment.

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Setting it straight

Corrections

William R. Seaton, chairman of the Morehead State University Board of Regents, is not on the search committee for a new president as stated in an article in Thursday's Herald-Leader.

Memo: SEE CORRECTION BELOW

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