

9-10-2001

The Murray State News, September 10, 2001

The Murray State News

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/msu_collection

Recommended Citation

The Murray State News, "The Murray State News, September 10, 2001" (2001). *Murray State University Collection*. 1810.

https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/msu_collection/1810

This Newspaper is brought to you for free and open access by the Newspapers at Murray State's Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Murray State University Collection by an authorized administrator of Murray State's Digital Commons. For more information, please contact msu.digitalcommons@murraystate.edu.

the murray state news



page two
Students have mixed opinions about president-elect Alexander and the process that determined the student vote.



page two
Faculty Regent Terry Strieter said King Alexander's desire to get faculty advice and support may eventually change its opinion of the president-elect.

September 10, 2001

www.thenews.org

Vol. 77, No. 3



Alexander prepares for throne



F. King Alexander
President-elect

By LOREE STARK
EDITOR IN CHIEF

F. King Alexander was offered and accepted the job of 10th president at Murray State University after a 10-1 vote at Friday's Board of Regents meeting.

Alexander, presently an assistant professor of higher education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and son of acting

President Kern Alexander, accepted the offer via speakerphone at the end of the meeting.

"I appreciate the offer and I am honored and privileged to have an opportunity to serve the board, the students, the faculty, the staff, the alumni, the community and the state of Kentucky," Alexander said. "I accept the offer and look forward to working with all

groups ... for progressing Murray State toward the future."

Staff Regent Lori Dial and Student Regent Nikki Key were among the ten regents that voted for Alexander.

Key said when the presidential search began last spring, students expressed three qualities they wanted in a new president: the ability to relate to them, visibil-

ity on campus and someone with an external drive who would seek out opportunities for the school in Frankfort and Washington, D.C.

After consulting her constituency, Key said she "wholeheartedly and enthusiastically" made the student vote for F. King Alexander.

Faculty Regent Terry Strieter was the only member of the board who did

not vote in support of offering the presidency to Alexander.

"I am the only board member to vote negative," Strieter said. "It's my obligation as the faculty regent to reflect the views of my constituency ... King Alexander will be our next president and I think the faculty is going to have a

see **ALEXANDER / 3**

"If King Alexander continues to do the things he talked about today, the faculty will eventually come to support him ..."

President-elect seeks faculty support

By JASON BILLINGSLEY
NEWS EDITOR

In spite of seemingly strained relationships between some faculty members and his father, F. King Alexander said he wants open communication with the faculty at a press conference Saturday.

Alexander said he believes in open talks between faculty, staff and students and allowing established academic authorities to operate their departments.

Throughout the administration of Acting President Kern Alexander, Faculty Senate members expressed concern that they were left out of many decisions that impacted them.

The faculty voted overwhelmingly not to support Alexander's bid for the Murray State presidency at an open forum Thursday. 90 of the 95 faculty who issued a vote gave him an unacceptable rating as president.

However, the faculty opinion of Alexander may change if his actions speak as loud as the words he spoke at Saturday's press conference.

"He couldn't have said a more correct thing (at Saturday's press conference) as far as the faculty are concerned," said Faculty Regent Terry Strieter, the only regent to cast a dissenting vote. "As he said today, to use

the expertise that's already here to help run the University is precisely what shared governance is all about. If King Alexander continues to do the things he talked about today, the faculty will eventually come to support him and maybe become his biggest supporters eventually."

Strieter said although some faculty members openly express their opinion, they are not opposed to every action of the Board of Regents.

"The faculty march to the tune of a different drummer," he said. "In the academic community, the idea of constructive criticism and academic freedom are the essential ingredients of that institution. To have criticism by our faculty is not to be taken in a negative way, but taken in a way that the institution is working to make Murray State the best school possible."

Alexander did not disagree. For Murray State to progress, he said collaborating with the faculty and hearing its opinions is important.

"I believe in what the faculty can do," Alexander said. "We have a great group of faculty here, and it would be a waste for the institution not to take advantage of the knowledge that exists within those faculty. Their passion for this institution should be taken advantage of and should



Laura Deaton/The News

Alexander answered questions at a faculty forum last Wednesday. Faculty Regent Terry Strieter cast the only dissenting vote at the Board of Regents meeting Thursday.

be incorporated into the design of the structure of where the institution is going."

The faculty circulated Gov. Paul Patton's phone number earlier this week in an effort to get him to investigate the search that led to Alexander's selection.

After the press conference on Saturday, State Senator Bob Jackson, D-Murray, said the campus should proceed with King Alexander as president.

"I think it would be inappropriate (to involve the governor)," Jackson said. "I think it's time to put down the swords and turn them into plowshares, as it's been said before. Let's move the institution forward. He's hired, he's here and he's going to be a great president. Let's give him the tools to be successful."

Patton was in Los Angeles on Friday and was unavailable for

comment. Patton's Press Secretary Rusty Chevront issued a statement on behalf of the governor after Friday's vote.

Said Chevront: "The Governor has always said it was his job to appoint the regents who have the best intention of the University in heart, and therefore, (the decision is left) up to the Board to choose who is the most qualified candidate to run the University."

Student reactions mixed on outcome



NIKKI KEY
Student Regent

By JASON BILLINGSLEY
NEWS EDITOR

Student Regent Nikki Key said she made her decision to support Alexander after reading student comments about forums with the three candidates and talking to students.

The Student Government Association voted at its annual first-week retreat on Aug. 29 and at its first meeting on Wednesday not to take a vote on who it wanted to support as president but to support whomever the Board of Regents selected.

Key said the reasoning was "to make sure the students got off on the right foot with whoever the Board selected as president."

Many representatives of the SGA said Alexander was the best choice for president after hearing him speak at his student forum, which was moved to coincide with the weekly SGA meeting.

"I think he's very charismatic,

energetic and younger," said Londiwe Mkhize, junior from Johannesburg, South Africa and Regents College senator. "I think he can relate (to students) better than someone who was older. There might be some who didn't want him as president because of his father's history, but when they get to know him as president, they'll realize it was a good choice."

Residential College Association President Josh Rose, junior from Salem, Ill., said Alexander talked to the students on their level during his forum and can relate to them.

Rose said if students looked down on Alexander because of his age and lack of experience it was because they had not had the chance to meet him.

"I believe when students down or criticize him, they haven't had the chance to meet him like we have in the forums, and they're showing a level of ignorance there," he said. "If they have a problem with him being Kern's son, they need to be

(at the forums) and ask the questions. He doesn't have experience on his side, but he knows about Murray State and he related to students well at the meeting."

Shane Shoemaker, senior from Anna, Ill. and Jeremy Osborne, sophomore from Norris City, Ill., said they disagreed with the SGA's decision not to endorse a specific candidate.

"I think the whole reason we have a vote is to use it to make a statement," Shoemaker said. "I think abstaining is just throwing away that whole purpose; it defeats the whole reason for having a voice in the system. I understand her point that she wanted to start out on a good foot, but surely an incoming president can overlook something like that and not take it personally."

Osborne said members of SGA should have asked for student opinion on the situation.

"I wonder why the Board of Regents picked him if there's an overwhelming (amount of people)

outspoken against him," Osborne said. "I think it would have been good if (the SGA) had taken a vote of the students and they could have gotten a more clear view of what the students thought, and not just the elected representatives."

Key said she heard some of the senators say they talked to students in their classes, but did not know how many students were reached by those efforts.

Sylvester Merritt, junior from Clarksville, Tenn., said he was very upset about the lack of a vote by the SGA.

"A lot of people were rooting for Bates, and instead they just went ahead and listened to the Board of Regents who already had their mind set on who they wanted in," Merritt said. "I think it's a travesty to the whole University."

Some students said the Board of Regents made a poor choice in hiring Alexander.

"... IT'S ALSO THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY NOT TO BE APATHETIC ABOUT THE SITUATION AND TO WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON ON CAMPUS."

ALEXANDER:

President-elect supports residential colleges, Greek system, student organizations

From Page 1

difficult time ... I can't predict how long that might be."

At a press conference Saturday, Sid Easley, chairman of the Board of Regents, addressed questions surrounding the presidential search process.

"This was not done in a vacuum," Easley said. "This was not done in a smoke-filled room. It was a long process, and had we been wanting to do this immediately, believe me, we wouldn't have put seven months into it. We would have done it in the first month."

Easley cited recommendations from the senior vice president for administration at the University of Wisconsin and former Murray State President Constantine "Deno" Curris as affirmations of Alexander's ability to effectively lead the University.

"For eight years, we've had a quarterback as president," Easley said. "Well, we got tired of that. Now we have a point guard."

Easley said one similarity

between Alexander and his father is their aversion of losing.

Alexander said his passion for higher education in public systems led him to the presidency.

"I truly hope I don't let any of you down," Alexander said. "It's a great experiment for all of us, I think."

Alexander elaborated by addressing the issue of succeeding his father as president. He said it is a first for a public institution of higher learning, and pressure is associated with his position.

"I teach the history of higher education, and this has happened where a father-son situation has happened in private universities in the past, but has never happened at a public university. This is somewhat a great experiment - that I understand because of my knowledge of higher education history."

Alexander said his choice to accept the presidency at Murray was a "family decision." His wife died of breast cancer, in

January and he has two daughters, ages 2 and 5.

"I'm not making this decision by myself," Alexander said. "I'm making this decision for my family. I've seen this community for the last eight years. I really love this community. I believe this community is a nurturing community."

Alexander said he was unsure of when he would begin his term. He said he would have to notify his students about the situation in the next week before he decides.

"I don't want to let my students down," Alexander said. "I won't let my students down in one form or the other."

Alexander said in his first semester as president he would like to spend time learning more about Murray State and its issues.

"I'd like to interact regularly with the faculty and the staff and essentially sit here and listen," Alexander said.

Alexander said he did not plan

to take an active role in academic affairs at the University.

"I believe academic affairs are ... run by the faculty and the provost and the provost staff and the deans," Alexander said. "And I believe that if I tried to meddle in the area of academic affairs, even though I was involved in many projects at the University of Wisconsin, I might mess everything up."

Economically, Alexander said Murray State could do better with federal research grants.

"I think we can make strides in this area," Alexander said. "I think that a lot of it has to do with visibility; it has a lot to do with the type of grants we are applying for and I encourage all faculty to move in this direction because it is important to this institution."

In terms of student life, Alexander lauded University institutions such as intercollegiate athletics, student organizations and the Greek system.

"I want to link students to as

many things as possible, to as many opportunities as possible," Alexander said. "I want them here all the time. I want them to take full advantage of every opportunity provided to them."

Alexander said his personal experience as a residential college graduate from Oxford University in England made him a supporter of the residential college system.

"Residential colleges give students opportunities to identify with a smaller group within the campus," Alexander said. "These residential colleges ... are a microcosm to the institution as a whole."

Alexander also said instead of emphasizing one or two academic disciplines, as is the trend with other public higher education systems, Murray State should continue to balance.

"People say you shouldn't be all things to all people," Alexander said. "I think we should be as many things to as many people as we can possibly be."

STUDENTS:

Key seeks 'two-way' communication between SGA, student population

From Page 2

"I think the Board of Regents is just interested in the Board of Regents," Shoemaker said.

"I have very little faith in the Board of Regents, and after this, it just seals the deal," John Gibson, senior from Henderson, said. "It's going to look really bad (for Murray State to have Alexander succeed his father.)"

The low student attendance at student forums concerned Key. She said about 20 students were at the forum for G. Daniel Howard, five of which were the SGA Executive Council.

The Alexander student forum on Wednesday was moved to coincide with the weekly SGA meeting to help students with work and class conflicts and had a higher attendance, although most attending were SGA members.

Key said the Donald Bates forum could not be moved because of conflicts with Greek and residential college activities, and only 10 students showed up for the student forum with Bates, again with all five SGA Executive Board members part of the that figure.

Key said students needed to actively seek information about what's going on on campus.

"I think one of the biggest issues we have as a student body on this campus is somewhere, there is a breakdown in getting information to the students," she said. "However, it's also the student's responsibility not to be apathetic about the situation and to want to know what's going on on campus. It's a two-way street; we can get it out there, but they have to take the initiative to get the information from us as

well."

Gibson said he could find no information about the forums anywhere on campus, and he and his friends were actively searching for information about the forums.

With the selection process over, the student body must now adapt to Alexander as president. Jared Gentry, junior from Metropolis, Ill., said Alexander might improve on areas where students felt his father failed.

"If he's more based on the students, that's basically what we need right now at the University because I never saw Kern in person," Gentry said. "(A visible president) is what the University needs instead of somebody just sitting behind a curtain."

Sports editor Justin McGill contributed to this story.



Ryan Brooks/The News

Student Regent Nikki Key explains her vote to the other board members at the Board of Regents meeting Friday.

The



University Store

welcomes

**Dr. F. King
Alexander**

*Murray State's
10th President*