

David Dooley shares his plans for University of Idaho presidency

Finalist for UI's top job pays visit to Moscow campus

By Halley Griffin, Daily News staff writer

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David Dooley has three visions for the University of Idaho.

He wants to emphasize that undergraduate education and scholarly activities go hand-in-hand, redouble the UI's efforts in its statewide outreach mission and pump up the university as an international destination.

"We need to bring the world to Idaho," he said Monday. "I think this could be an international crossroads, even more than it is."

Dooley, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Montana State University, is one of two assumed frontrunners for the UI presidency.

The presidential search committee was formed by the State Board of Education in June to find a replacement for former president Tim White. Five finalists were announced last month, with Dooley and Kansas State University Provost and Senior Vice President Duane Nellis scheduled for campus visits.

Nellis visited the UI last week, and both candidates were grilled on issues facing the university this year.

Dooley declined to answer questions about why the State Board of Education should select him, instead saying that selecting the next president is more about finding the best match between the institution and the leader.

He answered every other question head-on, telling listeners that the UI's current consideration of the undergraduate physics program for closure is surprising but a hard question worth considering.

"I don't think it's inappropriate to ask how we can do it better," he said.

Andrew Turner, director of a cooperative medical education program between the University of Washington and schools in Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho, asked Dooley the same question he asked Nellis. He wanted to know how Dooley is poised to lead the UI in the debates on the future of medical and legal education in the state.

Dooley advocated expanding both the number of seats in the WWAMI program (currently 20), and in the College of Law by expanding both in Boise and in Moscow.

Dooley also told the crowd he believes university rivalries are healthy on the athletic field, but have no place beyond that.

"I wouldn't mind at all if in front of the president's residence somebody laid something down in blue and orange for everybody to wipe their feet on," he said. "That's fine as long as it begins and ends on the field of athletics. ... Outside of that, if we continue to view each other as competitors, we tend to waste the public's money."

Dooley, who is in his 16th year at another land-grant university, told the audience he was inspired by the possibility of leading one.

He opened the forum with a history of the Morrill Act, which established the land-grant colleges.

"We're facing pretty difficult times in the United States right now, and in fact globally," he said, asking the crowd to think of a different time in U.S. history.

He described the country in July 1862, just after the Battle of Shiloh had been fought and 25,000 men had been killed or maimed.

"And it's not inappropriate to note that at a much worse time in the history of the United States ... that the Congress of the United States had the vision and the foresight to do something truly heroic. That is, they passed the Morrill Act of 1862 and created the American land-grant university," he said.

Dooley said that decision shaped higher education for more than a century.

"To be a part of that mission, as a president, I think anybody, almost anybody, at least this body, would feel very honored to be a part of that tradition and that history and that future," he said.

State Board of Education spokesman Mark Browning said the next step is for the full board to interview both Nellis and Dooley.

He said he hopes to have both interviews completed within a month.

At that point it will be up to the board to decide whether to schedule any of the other three finalists for campus visits, or to make a selection between Nellis and Dooley.

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