

OUR VIEW: UI prez search effort near derailment

By Murf Raquet, for the editorial board

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The process is moving forward.

That's what State Board of Education officials recently said about the University of Idaho presidential search.

Hmmm.

OK, that means those same officials have picked who they want to lead the state's flagship university for the next few years.

Not quite.

The board and its hired headhunters originally named five candidates for the job left vacant by the departure of Tim White for warmer climes.

Of those five, two were brought to campus for the traditional dog-and-pony show. Presumably they were the finalists, since no other candidates were invited.

In February, one of the uninvited candidates dropped out of the running.

Last week, one of the two finalists gave notice he was withdrawing from consideration.

Kansas State University Provost Duane Nellis and the state board were not able to come to terms about the job's compensation package.

The reason was a bit odd at this late stage in the process. Nellis should have been well aware of the salary range - about \$270,000 per year - before he made a formal application. Certainly salary is thrown out as bait to attract the best and brightest, and the figure was mentioned in the media.

With Nellis gone, Montana State University Provost David Dooley is the last finalist standing. By default, he presumably gets the job - if he wants it.

UI and board officials should pause and move back a few steps and stop painting themselves into the proverbial corner.

Invite the other two candidates to campus for a shot at the job. Then make a decision. In fact, in light of recent events, it would be prudent to also include in the mix the man who currently occupies the president's chair.

There is a lot to do at the UI and time is at a premium. The board should fill the chair with the best candidate soon.