



## Des Moines Register

### Letters to the Editor

REGISTER READERS

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#### **Keep U of I search committee small**

As U of I President David Skorton heads to Cornell, the Iowa Board of Regents has a most important job: finding an outstanding leader to take the reins of the state's flagship university.

But if plans announced come to pass ("U of I: President Needs University Support," March 12), the regents will have abdicated their most important responsibility.

Faculty, staff and students have proposed a gigantic presidential search committee — 23 to be exact — that would include only two regents, 11 faculty members, three staff, three students and two alumni.

That's no way to pick a president. Effective boards understand the tradition of shared governance — the participation of faculty, and sometimes students, in developing policies that affect academic life — but don't confuse the value of that tradition with their own ultimate authority. The presidential selection committee should consist solely or primarily of trustees, and should be chaired by a trustee.

While it is imperative that a variety of external constituencies be included, they need not sit on the search committee. Indeed, an effective search committee should be small. The larger the group, the more vetoes there are. The more vetoes there are, the more likely the final candidates will represent the lowest common denominator — mediocrity.

There are simply too many constituencies to include without making the committee too large. And it is questionable to what extent one professor or one alumnus "represents" all faculty or alumni.

While faculty, staff and others have much to offer, they cannot be counted on to bring the larger perspective — the public interest — to bear. That's what the regents were appointed to do; and that's why they need to be in charge.

— Anne D. Neal, president, American Council of Trustees and Alumni, Washington, D.C.