

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees Chair Michael Vekich offered the following comments during the February 9, 2017 Board of Trustees meeting:

The most important responsibility of the Board of Trustees is the selection of the chancellor. A wise, effective, visionary, and collaborative leader is a necessary condition to the success of our colleges and universities and their ability to serve students and communities across the state of Minnesota.

When Chancellor Rosenstone announced last April his intention retire on July 31st, with the assistance of Storbeck/Pimentel & Associates, this board embarked, with great care and intentionality, on a national search for the next chancellor.

The search advisory committee was led by attorney George Soule and was comprised of trustees, students, faculty, and staff as well as presidents, members of the chancellor's cabinet, and community leaders.

I want to thank George Soule and the search advisory committee for the dedication with which they did their work. They devoted countless hours to vetting the candidates.

In all, 43 applications were received, from which the search advisory committee selected 10 individuals for interviews; eight elected to participate. Reference and background checks were conducted. As a result of the initial interviews, the top three candidates were invited to stand as finalists.

On Tuesday of this week, trustees interviewed the candidates, as did members of the chancellor's cabinet and many of the college and university presidents. Yesterday, members of the board of trustees, presidents, faculty, staff, employees and students took part in forums held here in the system office and broadcast online. Those who took part in the forums were able to hear from the candidates, ask questions, and provide feedback. As a result, we received hundreds of comments.

The search process was robust, and I am proud of the great lengths we went to in order to hear from as many stakeholders as we could. Everyone who took part in the search cared deeply about this process and its outcome.

I know I speak for the entire board when I say thank you to everyone who participated in the search, met the candidates, asked their questions, and provided their feedback.

This is a critical moment for our colleges and universities. They play a central role in providing the talent businesses and communities across Minnesota need in order to thrive. And the chancellor is an incredibly important leader of this work.

All three of the candidates who visited this week engaged us in thoughtful discussions about the challenges our colleges and universities face, as well as the opportunities that are possible in the coming years.

I want to thank them for their interest in our system and for their willingness to engage in this arduous process.

Each of the finalists had their own strengths, but as we evaluated the feedback we received from our stakeholders, it became increasingly clear that we have not yet found the right person to lead Minnesota State over the years ahead.

Therefore, I believe the search for the next Minnesota State chancellor should continue and that we should appoint an individual to serve as interim chancellor. When it became clear that we had not yet found the right person to lead us, I began giving serious thought to who could provide interim leadership as the search continues.

It has to be someone who understands us, who can hit the ground running, and who can continue to move the board's agenda.

I reached out to this leader to find out if he'd consider serving as an interim chancellor, and I am thrilled to inform you that he indicated that he would indeed serve.

RECOMMENDATION

I am pleased to recommend to you the appointment of Dr. Devinder Malhotra as interim chancellor. Dr. Malhotra is honored to be called to this service and, more importantly, he is prepared for the challenge this role presents.

Dr. Malhotra retired last year after a distinguished career in higher education as a teacher, scholar, and gifted leader.

We recruited him to serve as interim president of Metropolitan State University at a challenging time for the university. He served for two years, from 2014 through 2016.

He was incredibly well-prepared for that role because he had served as provost and vice president for academic affairs at St. Cloud State University for the previous five years.

Prior to his Minnesota State service, he was dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern Maine; and at the University of Akron, he served as chair of the Faculty Senate, chair of the Department of Economics, and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. For three decades he was a tenured professor of economics with a distinguished scholarly career writing on a

wide range of topics in his field, including global economics and manufacturing in the United States.

He received his Ph.D. in economics from Kansas State University.

When the board appointed Dr. Malhotra as interim president of Metropolitan State, we had high expectations for his leadership. We asked him not to be a placeholder, but rather to keep the university moving carefully and steadily forward. The university could not afford to remain on hold.

Of course we know now that it did not remain on hold, which is one of the most important reasons I am recommending Dr. Malhotra's appointment today. Under his leadership, the university moved forward on many fronts:

- building capacity,
- strategic repositioning,
- bringing about needed organizational changes, and
- creating and nurturing partnerships with other Minnesota State colleges and universities, as well as with the community, philanthropic partners, businesses, and local government.

Dr. Malhotra put the budget on sounder footings, aligned university operations with the goals of Charting the Future and the Metro Baccalaureate Plan, and developed partnerships not just here in the Twin Cities and Minnesota, but also in Japan and China.

He also mentored his Metropolitan State provost, Ginny Arthur, whom the board was delighted to appoint as president last year.

As provost at St. Cloud State, Dr. Malhotra was deeply engaged in nearly every aspect of the university:

- new academic initiatives;
- campus-wide strategic planning;
- the reorganization of academic units to align with the university's strategic goals; and
- the restructuring of budgets to adjust to available funding.

At the system level, Dr. Malhotra served on:

- the Charting the Future workgroup on education of the future;
- the task force the system established with the tribal nations;
- the Long Term Financial Sustainability Workgroup; and

- the systemwide Academic Affairs Council.

Dr. Malhotra has a thoughtful understanding of what it means to lead and how to do so in a collaborative fashion. He believes that a higher education leader should set a tone for the system, and that tone should emanate from a shared understanding of our strategic framework. He believes that leading means empowering students, faculty and staff; engaging external stakeholders; and focusing on student success. And he is a savvy pragmatist who will work in collaboration with our presidents and with the chancellor's cabinet to help lead Minnesota State over this interim period.

Dr. Malhotra has the well-earned reputation of leading with calm, warmth, wit, humor, and heart.

As interim president, he used these qualities to inspire calm in others, bring people together, encourage them to move past previous challenges to see what's possible, and solve problems.

Dr. Malhotra performed brilliantly as interim president. He clearly understands the chancellor's role. And has a proven track record of leadership, which makes him the ideal person to lead as interim chancellor.

There is much that we expect him to help us accomplish in the coming year, which includes completing the priorities this board has set, most notably implementation of Charting the Future, and moving forward on ways to ensure the long term financial sustainability of our colleges and universities.

We are fortunate to be able to tap into the deep reservoir of gifts that Devinder Malhotra will bring to this work. He is a member of our family who understands who we are, where we have been, and where we need to go.

The fact that he is an economist in these financially challenging times will help, too.

Colleagues, let me conclude by quoting a faculty member at Metropolitan State University, who wrote the following to Dr. Malhotra as he was about to retire last year:

"Before you came, we were adrift, and there were fears that our ship was foundering. A large part of the crisis was attributable to key personnel who had lost the confidence and trust of many people at our university. While we were in the process of building stronger leadership when you arrived, several major changes still needed to be made. Under your leadership, Metropolitan State continued its acquisition of strong administrative talent, and it has been

my pleasure, and one of the best parts of my job, to work with many of these new people over the past two years.”

Although Dr. Malhotra made it clear early in the search process that he would not be a candidate for the permanent position as chancellor, when I contacted him about an interim role, he did not hesitate to say yes.

This board has vetted Dr. Malhotra for a tremendously important leadership role once before, so he is no stranger to us. His record of accomplishment within our system gives me great confidence in recommending his appointment as interim chancellor of Minnesota State. We can expect nothing less from him than inspired leadership.

Therefore, I move that we appoint Dr. Devinder Malhotra as interim chancellor of Minnesota State.