

SPECIAL MEETING

BOARD OF REGENTS
NEVADA SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Conference Room, System Administration
5550 W. Flamingo Road, Suite C-1, Las Vegas
Monday, April 24, 2006

Members Present: Mrs. Dorothy S. Gallagher, Vice Chairman

Mrs. Thalia M. Dondero

Mrs. Linda C. Howard

Mr. James Dean Leavitt

Mr. Howard Rosenberg

Dr. Jack Lund Schofield

Mr. Steve Sisolak

Members Absent: Mr. Mark Alden

Dr. Stavros S. Anthony

Dr. Jill Derby

Mr. Douglas Roman Hill

Mr. Bret Whipple

Mr. Michael B. Wixom

Others Present: Mr. Daniel Klaich, Executive Vice Chancellor

Mrs. Mary Ellen McMullen, UNR Foundation

Dr. Stephen G. Wells

Vice Chairman Dorothy S. Gallagher called the meeting to order at 10:13 a.m., with all members present except Regents Alden, Anthony, Derby, Hill, Whipple, and Wixom.

1. Information Only-Candidate Visit with Board of Regents - Dr. Stephen G. Wells, a finalist for the position of President of the University of Nevada, Reno, met with members of the Board of Regents.

Vice Chairman Gallagher explained this was a less formal agenda than the previous meeting.

Regent Howard asked Dr. Wells about his background before coming to DRI.

Dr. Wells said he was labeled as a non-traditionalist, which he found humorous, since 20 years of his life was represented as a tenured faculty member. He began his career at the University of New Mexico, where he spent 15 years. The University of California at Riverside was his second tenured position. He was committed and worked diligently with both the undergraduate and graduate levels in the core curriculum of the Geology department, which is now Earth & Planetary Sciences. He ultimately built a graduate program, which has sustained itself and has a national reputation. That process provided his first real introduction into fundraising. An endowed investment was made to the

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department and, even though he did not help secure that endowment, he was the chairman of the department and had to steward the entire process and work with that board on a regular basis. Dr. Wells left New Mexico and went to California to build and run the graduate program, with the stipulation that he would teach Introductory to Earth Sciences & Geography, which began with 13 students and grew to 120. He then had the opportunity to work with the cooperative extension at U.C. Riverside, which was tied to U.C. Davis, where he gained insights into their mission, especially from the agricultural and urban-rural interface.

Dr. Wells stated he had a fairly rich history, which culminated with approximately 35 graduate students, of

which the majority were Masters, and 13 were Ph.D.'s. One Masters and one Ph.D. came from UNR. He stated that he has had a long-term history and traditional academic process, with exposure to Los Alamos and Sandia National Lab. He added that being department chair was one of the toughest administrative positions on any campus.

Regent Leavitt asked Dr. Wells to list his advantages, aside from location and his present position at DRI. Dr. Wells felt a key advantage was familiarity with the state strategically. He has worked with the System office, the Board of Regents, the Chancellor, districts in Las Vegas, Reno and rural communities. He has ties with the legislators, as well as in Washington, D.C. He has had seven years of strong, reliable relationships, being true to his word, and working diligently in both Carson City and Washington. He felt that having that strategic view was one of the strongest aspects, which would not be a learning curve for him.

Dr. Wells said he offered the ability to walk through both the northern and southern parts of the state. He has residences in Las Vegas and Reno, works in both communities and understands the different cultural settings and their aspirations. He would try to match the goals of UNR with the remainder of the communities. He also recognizes that UNR is a statewide institution with its Cooperative Extension and land grant mission, and knows its importance for working in the rural communities, from Smith and Mason Valleys to the Elko area. Dr. Wells said those were some of his advantages, along with his views, his commitment, and a strong aspiration of success for the state, because he is here and that is fundamental. Another critical aspect he offers is international connections, to prepare the university to reach a higher ranking level, which was the next objective to attain. It took 10 years for Arizona to move from one Carnegie ranking to another, but Dr. Wells said he would be satisfied preparing UNR and promoting excellence in all aspects of the campus, which would be a very exciting undertaking.

Regent Leavitt asked what excited Dr. Wells most about the opportunity. Dr. Wells said returning to his academic roots. He has served as president of DRI, which not only gave him the opportunity to serve as a president in the System, but DRI is a unique institution with a business-like facet, which taught him a lot of business savvy. He felt that he also brings a great balance. He was anxious to apply that experience to a phenomenal institution that now has every opportunity to move forward and reach even greater levels

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of excellence and promote those programs of distinction. The thought of rolling up his sleeves and developing a common direction, which is essential for the campus, excited him.

Regent Howard wanted to know Dr. Wells' experience and strength in managing such a multi-dimensional organization, and the different constituencies and politics. Dr. Wells felt the approach was basically similar, just more complicated. He said the politics should not change; everyone should be treated with respect, dignity, and openness. The business management outlook should not change the general philosophy regarding the best financial oversight. Effective delegating, trust and a strong communication process would be required. It would be a challenge to have a more complicated aspect, there would be a few more stakeholders and greater diversity among them, but as the president of UNR, he offered the same skill set. He has experience in approaching stakeholders, from alumni and different areas, and he is able to walk amongst them. He stated he would need to be more effective in delegation and finding the right people.

Regent Howard asked how Dr. Wells would feel calling a Regent for input or on matter of concern. Dr. Wells said he believed in communication, so the difference with this position would be more immediate issues, which could warrant more communication with the Regents. Right now DRI operates fairly well, but it may not necessarily be the case on a campus. His philosophy was not to surprise anyone. Everyone should work together and make sure, if there is a problem, it should not be hidden, which is only due diligence and proper operations. Regent Howard said it was important for a president to understand they must communicate with all Regents.

Regent Howard asked how Dr. Wells was going to transition from the structure of DRI to dealing with minutia issues that a college president has to address on a daily basis. She said many times it was because the administration did not follow through, so the president has to get involved. Dr. Wells said the buck stops with the president. That was one of the things he tried to encourage at DRI; if there was a problem, do not hide it,

bring it forward to be solved. Communication will never be effective when blind sided. It is best to hit problems straight on.

Vice Chairman Gallagher felt that communication was a two-way street. While it could be difficult to reach Regents, it was also important for Regents to communicate with the president when concerned about a particular issue. Dr. Wells said that related to the trust issue. Hopefully the Board will feel they have that trust and it will not be betrayed.

Regent Sisolak stated he had mixed feelings because Dr. Wells has done a great job at DRI. Regent Sisolak asked Dr. Wells if he was applying for other jobs, or just this one. Dr. Wells said he has never applied for another job since coming to DRI. He has been nominated, but he let the nominations pass. The University of Alaska, Fairbanks was one. He was not seeking other positions, but he has been nominated.

1. Information Only-Candidate Visit with Board of Regents – (Cont'd.)

Regent Sisolak said that as president of DRI, Dr. Wells developed many international contacts with research individuals, and asked whether he would take those contacts with him when leaving one position to move to another. Dr. Wells responded that he would hope not because the greatest thrill in his professional life was looking back and seeing that he did something; that he built a program that persisted, such as the one at New Mexico. It was a great accomplishment to have made something happen that lasts. There was no doubt that contacts would continue with him because of his position, but there were contracts/relationships that were woven into DRI that would remain there and not necessarily go with him. He would utilize those relationships for meeting the mission at UNR, but never do anything to damage DRI. He felt there was now a chance for the entire System to work collaboratively at the System level, and not hurt another institution. He would not try to leverage anything away from DRI, but rather he would look for opportunities for the university to enhance prospects for DRI. Regent Sisolak felt it was a difficult question, and that Dr. Well's gave an excellent, thoughtful answer.

Regent Dondero stated she was aware that Dr. Wells' research has been wonderful, but she wondered how he would approach the medical school. Dr. Wells responded that from a managerial standpoint the medical school was not dissimilar from DRI in terms of how much it brought in independently from the state and how it has to operate on a soft money basis. He would feel very comfortable. He was not an atmospheric scientist, or a physicist or a biologist, but he understood the basic needs and directions to help guide those fields to where they could be successful. He did not see a real challenge. Again, it was a more complicated aspect, but business-wise it was similar to DRI and he was comfortable with it. He has interacted with different sciences and felt the medical sciences were just one more aspect of that equation. He thought it was currently important to leverage the School of Medicine and all the health programs offered at the universities and the community colleges to build a successful health sciences program as a collaborative effort. One of the reasons he was attracted to the position at DRI was that having been in the University of California system, he would watch them spend \$3 million to move one faculty from UCLA to Berkley, or vice versa. Nevada provides the opportunity for not taking from anybody else, but to go and do something collectively in an innovative way. He thought there was that same opportunity for the health sciences program of not moving the School of Medicine from UNR, but building everyone else into a more collaborative effort.

Regent Leavitt said he was very interested in reading Dr. Wells' letter of interest when he applied for the position. He stated his previous meetings with DRI's faculty senate revealed that Dr. Wells' faculty liked and respected him. Regent Leavitt asked to what that was attributed. Dr. Wells said he dealt with them in a very respectful manner, shared governance, listened to them carefully, and used some of their ideas. He continued that the faculty senate brings their goals, which are worked on as a team. He believed that was part of it, but also faculty knew he was one of them. He has conducted research, he understands the struggle it takes to get grants and survive on grants. It was that process of being honest, open and listening to them.

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Regent Leavitt left the meeting.

Vice Chairman Gallagher observed that during Dr. Wells' previous evaluation the DRI faculty expressed concern that he would burn out because he worked too hard.

Regent Sisolak left the meeting.

Regent Leavitt entered the meeting.

Dr. Wells said he followed up with the recommendation and DRI now has an Executive Vice President of Research and Chief Science Officer serving as second in command. This restructure occurred approximately one month ago. It was planned during retreats and was unveiled at an all employee meeting, where presented it and notified the Chancellor.

Vice Chairman Gallagher observed that the provost model has not gone well at UNR. She asked Dr. Wells whether he would employ a provost as president. Dr. Wells saw no reason for changing that model. It was a complicated process and it was necessary to have someone on site watching at a level that the president cannot because of the external requirements. Dr. Wells would spend time meeting with the faculty senate, department chairs, deans, students, and governing bodies to keep his finger on the pulse because he could not be detached. It would probably be a slightly different type of model, one perhaps a little closer where the president and provost work as a team and appear very calmly together at forums. With something as complicated and dynamic as UNR, the provost model was needed there.

Vice Chairman Gallagher related that some people felt the job application should eliminate the provost position. The Committee did not change it, feeling that this would be the new president's decision. Dr. Wells said that was not dissimilar to the problem that he faced when he came to DRI where, at that time, people did not see value in the Vice President of Research and asked that the position be removed. He felt you there could not be a research institution without a Vice President of Research. It was a relatively new position, which had not been given authority, and finances were such that resources could not have been provided. When that changed, the authority and resources followed. He felt that everyone agreed that was probably the most important position other than the presidents on campus. There was opportunity to work with people to mentor them and have things work appropriately if everything was laid out in terms of expectations and roles. He liked the team effort and felt people should see they were communicating.

Regent Howard observed that Dr. Wells travels significantly in his current position, and asked how he would adjust to being in the office every day and not traveling as much. Dr. Wells said the reason he travels so much is because DRI is an international organization. If there was travel with UNR it would be a different type of travel; to key foundations, donors, and not just within the confines of Nevada, but to alumni and other key people across the nation. It would be important for fundraising to have those contacts

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and interaction. That was part of the role of DRI's president. He would probably scale back significantly as president of UNR. If there were some need to travel, then it would be appropriate, but he did not foresee that type of travel schedule, especially internationally.

Regent Sisolak entered the meeting.

Regent Howard said she heard complaints about another president traveling too much. Dr. Wells said the president would be drawn out to make connections and leverage all types of opportunities. It was important to remember upon return to sit down and have a dialog with people. He has a faculty member at DRI who occasionally reminds him to have an all employee meeting.

Regent Leavitt said on the ballot this November, 2006, there will be a question regarding an elected versus an appointed Board and asked Dr. Wells his thoughts on this issue. Dr. Wells felt that one thing that would be important for this body to do was ascertain its effectiveness and lay out what has been accomplished over the past 10 to 15 years. The Board needs to identify what it has done for the betterment of the state. If the Board and the public agree and can articulate that, the question is answered. Dr. Wells felt he would like to see a mix of

representation with the governor having some input. Regent Leavitt asked what advantage Dr. Wells saw in that system. Dr. Wells replied it would offer diversity from different perspectives providing the best for higher education. People voting for who they felt would represent them, and the governor who has a more strategic view of the state, might be best for the state.

Vice Chairman Gallagher stated that the legislature had discussed elected vs. appointed Regents during the previous session. It was their intent to explore the appointment of Regents. With a mixed Board, she wondered whether an appointed or an elected Regent would have more clout.

Regent Sisolak noted a point of order feeling the Board should not be offering personal opinions.

Regent Rosenberg asked Dr. Wells if he was strong enough to go head-to-head with upper rank when necessary. Dr. Wells said he tried to express himself diplomatically. His goal is to work effectively with people in a very honest and open way. He felt he already experienced that as a candidate in this position when he asked the Chancellor about his willingness to let all campuses move forward, including UNR. There is currently a perception that there is an anchor around that campus, which was something he noticed while touring the campus. The campus must move forward, as all campuses do, and not hold anyone back for the sake of anyone else. Whether real or not, the perception is there, and he needed an answer from the Chancellor. Another posture Dr. Wells took was that he wanted assurances that the School of Medicine would not be removed from UNR; it was a foundation that would stay there and work with the health sciences program that reaches out to all the other campuses and creates a unique

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operation. Dr. Wells also asked the Chancellor if he would stay in his position for the next two legislative sessions because the new presidents coming in to UNR and UNLV need a person there without a change to provide stability at the higher levels.

Regent Rosenberg posed that, suppose tomorrow, the Chancellor decided to quit and what that would essentially mean to the campuses. Dr. Wells said it would hopefully mean that the principals would remain, since there has been quite a bit of flux in the System office, but they do not. They change with every administration. Certain fundamental issues would remain, but there would be more potential for turmoil because of a leadership change. When leaving an institution one wants it to stay on course. He was not sure that would be the case for the System office. There have been significant changes with every new leadership role in the Chancellor's position. He said that having that person stand in Carson City and articulate the common goals of the university system was helpful for everyone to be successful. Currently, the Chancellor is very effective in Carson City.

Regent Schofield left the meeting.

Regent Dondero asked Dr. Wells how he envisioned working with the community colleges, the state college, and K-12 so those students would get into the university. Dr. Wells currently had no specific plan. He would like to see what the campuses are doing before making any changes. He understood there is a move towards higher standards for the universities, and it was an important one, if executed at the right pace. He felt that an indication for how he would get along, in a generic sense, was that two community college presidents had nominated him for the position, which said something. There is a remarkable tiered system in this state. The community colleges are phenomenal, providing fundamental steps with different avenues of access for people. Clear communications are required so all students can be successful and move from one institution to another seamlessly. Regent Rosenberg said it was all a question of advisement. Dr. Wells agreed that it was, and advisement was meaningful to him as a student. It may be years before there is a fully functioning information technology system working, so they need to be very diligent with hands-on advice in the interim. He looked forward to that collaboration, strengthening the ability for everyone, and raising the level of the students' educational capabilities at the university. He would like the opportunity to study specific plans.

Regent Leavitt left the meeting.

Regent Dondero stated the students should come first.

Regent Leavitt entered the meeting.

Regent Leavitt asked Dr. Wells how long he thought he would need to accomplish his preliminary vision, and pointed out that four-year contracts were typically the norm. Dr. Wells felt that five years was too short, and 23 years was too long. He thought the question was more about how long one was effective as a leader of an institution, where

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new people bring about change. Dr. Wells explained that one of the reasons he was considering this position was because he felt a strong commitment to the state. He also knows that, eventually, someone else will need to lead DRI, although the condition at DRI is not at that point. Dr. Wells said, realistically, he would be looking at a 10-year goal. He stated that he does not view this as a stepping stone to something else.

Regent Schofield entered the meeting.

Regent Leavitt stated that everyone was sensitive to stability and length of time being critical components of the System. Regent Leavitt agreed that 10 years was a realistic visualization to achieve significant action. Dr. Wells stated Nevada was remarkably dynamic with its change and growth. A lot of effort went into developing strategic plans for UNR, some of which are great, but should probably be implemented at a larger level. At DRI he reviewed what had been done before making any changes.

Regent Howard asked how seriously the institutions take the Board of Regents' master plans and goals, and how clear Dr. Wells felt those plans and goals were. Dr. Wells stated the goals were fairly clear, but the challenge was how it translated to an individual faculty or staff member. That was the area that presented some challenges. Dr. Wells said deans and above understand the importance, but it does not carry through to the staff. Student success and access carries all the way down to the faculty. Regent Howard asked if they take them seriously. Dr. Wells stated he did not have an answer. Regent Howard stated she felt there were times the master plan and goals were not taken seriously. Dr. Wells said the goals were, but it was the implementation plans that were fundamental and therein lay the challenge. Dr. Wells stated that was not something addressed on a global level, but left up to the individual units, which for a large part was alright, but it would be better to understand about the overarching plans for those goals. We are just beginning to address matters such as P-16 issues and proper student success and access. Overarching implementation aspects are needed, which could be a great Regent/President retreat subject. Most faculty see these plans as meaningless because they do not see how it relates to them, which relates to implementation.

Regent Leavitt stated one subject that will be discussed at the June, 2006, meeting by the Board Development Committee will be a presentation from Vice Chancellor Jane Nichols about what other systems have done relative to a policy/education summit. This would be proposed for two to three days per year, where goals would be set for the System, with input from all of the stakeholders. Regent Leavitt asked Dr. Wells his opinion of this proposal. Dr. Wells stated he supports bringing people together and thinking strategically, with only that subject on the table; overarching challenges, goals, and implementations. Dr. Wells felt this type of meeting was key to making people comfortable working with one another.

Vice Chairman Gallagher asked how Dr. Wells felt about presidential evaluations, noting that the Board had met with the presidents and set goals for the coming year. She asked about the value of a presidential evaluation if goals were not set. Dr. Wells said it was

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important to have goals set, recognizing that they could change. He stated it was important to talk about those goals because it was a complex System that could sweep one away, causing one to lose sight of important issues. He supported the evaluation process, but felt that the periodic reviews that consider the long-term trend were critical ones.

Regent Rosenberg stated that because Dr. Wells had been in the System for a while, there would be certain

expectations of him that probably would not be expected of anyone else. He asked Dr. Wells what would be the most important thing he would do within the first six months as president of UNR, should he be selected. Dr. Wells stated it was relatively simple. Extremely important as the first achievement should be the establishment of a communication system that would be effective for that campus. Whoever is selected should know that it must be addressed, so to measure anyone immediately on huge fundraising efforts the first year could be a very damaging process because they have to look internally in order to move forward. Initially everyone will want the president to sit down and listen to them. People should not expect great things to happen within the first six months, but Dr. Wells felt if faculty, staff and students were behind him, there was nothing that could not be accomplished as a campus. He continued that associated with that is a common vision; what the university is - a research institution, an educational institution, etc. Defining the institution with some overarching goals and bringing everyone together with an effective communication system, working as a team, were primary. Dr. Wells stated that externally there was some collaboration to bring a lot of attention to the campus and the Nevada System of Higher Education.

Dr. Wells asked Regent Rosenberg what he thought was a top priority. Regent Rosenberg stated that trust was most important at this point. It is time to talk “to” one another, not “at” one another. Listening is important; hearing is vital. What they say and what they mean could be slightly different. Too often, personalities are confused with position. Dr. Wells stated this can be achieved with good communication and the trust will naturally follow.

Regent Schofield asked Dr. Wells about his short-range and long-range visions. Dr. Wells said the short-range was to develop a common vision and common goals. The long-range was to prepare the campus to move to a new ranking in the Carnegie system, within 5 to 10 years, through promotion of excellence at all levels.

Regent Sisolak left the meeting.

Regent Schofield asked Dr. Wells how he felt about athletics. Dr. Wells said he was very supportive and felt it was an integral part of the campus. He felt it was an important part of students’ lives, along with academics.

Mr. Daniel Klaich, Executive Vice Chancellor, stated there was a dialogue in higher education that would indicate the emphasis on research, and “publish or perish” should be reviewed. Given Dr. Wells’ background and his desire to transition, Mr. Klaich

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wondered about Dr. Wells’ thoughts in this regard. Dr. Wells said he would like to see, as part of the vision of this campus, one that innovates in educational aspects and scholastic achievement. He feels very strongly, based on his personal experience, that every faculty member cannot perform at the top of their level throughout their entire history in scholarly activities. There are cycles. If there were less emphasis on research and more on teaching, evaluation would be based primarily on that. It cannot be done forever, but it is understood that there are cycles. He would work with faculty to help them excel in their areas and not penalize them when their research efforts decline. He would try experimental things. Dr. Wells said this was difficult because there is so much pressure on institutions since research brings in the money and becomes the driver. He urged not to forget the heart and soul of that, which is innovation and education. He would also reward those who derive innovative programs.

Regent Howard asked Dr. Wells what he thought about a freshman college, where faculty were dedicated to just freshman to help decrease the dropout rate. Dr. Wells stated that the colleges could even extend that to people sharing common living facilities where the mentors are very close. Those kinds of steps for getting students on the right track are very important. He was helped himself as an undergraduate. He advocated demonstrating to students that you have an interest in them in order to earn their trust.

Dr. Wells asked what the most important thing was that the president needs to accomplish. Vice Chairman Gallagher observed that fundraising was important, but would need to take a back seat to restoring the unrest and lack of trust at the campus. She stated it will be important to communicate and for the president to be seen. The campus has to know they have a president who is with them, working for them, helping. If you start out that

way you can build the trust and then move on to other things. Facing the legislature will also be primary. There may be a perception that the president did not care what was going on; perception is interpreted as truth. Dr. Wells stated that every president works very hard, but when people do not know what the president is doing, that is when the trouble begins. They need to see what the president is doing. If people get behind the new president quickly, then the fundraising will follow.

Regent Rosenberg stated the faculty will support the new president and try to give all they can. The alumni needs attention, the foundation needs attention. It will be difficult to prioritize. Some people will be waiting for the first misstep. Balancing it will not be easy. Dr. Wells stated it would be a great challenge and hoped if he did misstep that he would be big enough to admit the error, work on problems, try to correct them, and let people know he understands. It all requires confidence and trust in the president.

Regent Leavitt said he wants a strong chancellor, a strong president, and a strong Board. He has been impressed that Dr. Wells has always been respectful and dignified in his speech. Regent Leavitt said if Dr. Wells was hired he would represent the presidency of the University Nevada, Reno. Presently, Dr. Wells is the figure head for the Desert Research Institute and Regent Leavitt hoped that he continued to always present himself in a manner in which the Board would be proud. Regent Leavitt hoped the same for the

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Board itself. Regent Leavitt said Dr. Wells has always exhibited himself with grace and dignity and hoped he would continue his relationships with the other presidents, the Chancellor and the Board. It said something that Dr. Wells was nominated by two presidents of the community colleges. Dr. Wells said he appreciated Regent Leavitt's comments, adding that he tried to be true to himself and hopefully he would do the same thing he did while at DRI and work with dignity and grace as before. In the end, what matters are the students.

2. Public Comment – None.

3. New Business – None.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Fini S. Dobyms
Secretary of the Board