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Finalist to run UA health supervised provost from '02-'05

RENÉE SCHAFFER HORTON

rshorton@tucsoncitizen.com

The lone finalist for the new position of vice president for health affairs at the University of Arizona once supervised the person leading the search at UA.

William M. Crist, dean of the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Medicine, supervised UA Executive Vice President and Provost Meredith Hay when she was director of the National Center for Gender Physiology at Missouri from 2002 to 2005.

Crist, who is a nationally known pediatric cancer investigator, will be at a public forum from 3 to 4 p.m. Thursday in DuVal Auditorium at University Medical Center.

Hay said in an e-mail that she and UA President Robert N. Shelton compiled a list of candidates over the past two months and from "this short list, which is confidential, we have identified a single finalist . . . who will be meeting with faculty, administrative leaders and community leaders this week."

She said UA is "still accepting applications of interest" but did not know if more candidates would be invited to UA.

Allison Vaillancourt, vice president for human resources, confirmed that applications for the position are still coming in.

"Bill Crist is the first person on the docket. He's not necessarily the last person in," she said.

The vice president for health affairs will be responsible for administration and coordination of "overall academic and medical services" at the UA College of Medicine campuses in Tucson and Phoenix, and for managing agreements among UA, University Medical Center and University Physicians Healthcare, the company that manages the faculty doctors' medical practices.

Shelton said the position will probably pay about \$500,000 annually.

Crist will meet with a search advisory committee this week, Hay said, and the committee will advise Shelton about the hire.

Committee members include the heads of various health sciences departments and UA Faculty Chair Wanda Howell.

Howell said the search was unusual because it wasn't led by a search committee, but "I completely understand it because of the Phoenix issue."

Howell added, "I'm not upset that the search wasn't done appropriately, because I understand this was a truly exceptional situation. But it is my job to make sure as the search for the deans begin that, by God, those will be done right."

Edward "Ted" Shortliffe resigned as dean of the UA College of Medicine-Phoenix in May, following a March 31 memo to Phoenix faculty members from then-UA Tucson College of Medicine Dean Keith Joiner, saying Shortliffe's title would be changed to "vice dean" because of "substantial confusion" over who was in charge in Phoenix.

Joiner resigned his position July 1, the same day Shelton announced the restructuring of UA's health sciences.

Howell said there have been other candidates who visited UA "for preliminary discussions with (Shelton) and the regents," but only Crist "made it through that first hoop."

"Unless somebody on the advisory committee finds out something really horrible about him, we can pretty much assume he'll be offered the position by virtue of the very careful, methodical way (Shelton and Hay) have gone about the search," she said.

Arizona Board of Regents President Fred Boice said the regents pushed for a quick search.

"I felt we needed to move with all dispatch in order that we could get the ship flying in an orderly direction as soon as possible," Boice said. "We didn't have time to get a committee together or a search firm and wait nine months."

He said Hay's prior working relationship with Crist "is a good thing."

"I have confidence in Dr. Hay and if she worked with him and found him to be competent, then that is better than a pig in a poke," Boice said.

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