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Staff editorial: Promises abound with presidential finalist

By:

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The UH System Board of Regents announced Monday the sole finalist for the dual position of UH System president and chancellor. This announcement is a breath of fresh air for the UH community.

Renu Khator is the provost and senior vice president at the University of South Florida, the ninth largest university in the nation.

Her achievements are many and varied, and while being a seasoned administrator and respected scholar are qualities that any university leader should have, Khator's diverse background could serve as a positive beacon for UH and Houston's multicultural population. This is a role the UH president should take seriously when representing a diverse university in an even more diverse city.

Khator, 52, has been the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and director of Environmental Science and Policy Program at USF. Besides fulfilling her role as provost and senior vice president, Khator has taught government and international affairs courses at USF since 1995.

To cap it off: She's a woman and a naturalized citizen.

If approved, Khator would be the first foreign-born president and the second female president at the University. Marguerite Barnett was the University's first female - and black - president. She took office Sept. 1, 1990 and stepped down in 1992 for health reasons.

A progressive choice from the board, Khator, who has a background in public policy, environmental issues and has been heavily involved in community projects at USF, has the potential to help continue leading the University toward flagship status, a goal that has been in the works for some time. Already involved with community programs, addressing the UH community should be an easy feat for her.

That's if she strays from the current administration's attitude toward student interaction, or the lack thereof.

Perhaps it's the potential honeymoon period that is making faculty members and students excited about a new leader taking the helm. Or maybe it's the excitement that a permanent leader will soon be filling the president's chair.

Or maybe Khator's philosophy in life, "When life gives you lemons and everyone else is busy making lemonade, think about making margaritas," is making some optimistic about the University's future.

Regardless, Khator's potential approval to be at the helm of the UH System could serve as a much needed boost in the continuing of positive strides, whether that's trying to achieve flagship status or addressing student needs such as parking woes.

A dynamic leader is needed for a university on an ever-changing path.

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