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The UH System Board of Regents unanimously approved on Monday the appointment of University of South Florida Vice President and Provost Renu Khator as the sole finalist for the position of UH president and chancellor.

'Right person, right time'

Board approves finalist in search for next UH president, chancellor

By: Mayra Cruz

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The UH System Board of Regents unanimously selected University of South Florida Provost Renu Khator as the sole finalist for the next UH president and chancellor.

"Dr. Khator is the right person at the right time for the University of Houston System," board Chairman Welcome Wilson said.

Formed in May, the 20-member search advisory committee was led by Regent Leroy Hermes after former President and Chancellor Jay Gogue announced that he was taking over the presidency at Auburn University in April.

The committee presented Khator, who is also USF's senior vice president, as the sole finalist to the board in a closed executive session, and the appointment was then approved in a public open meeting.

Khator will be the first Indian UH president and the second female to take the office. Marguerite Ross Barnett, both the first female and the first black president, was appointed in 1990.

During the five-month search process, the candidates were kept confidential while the board conducted interviews of the remaining candidates last week.

Interim President and Chancellor John Rudley was not under consideration as a potential candidate because of a board policy, UH Counsel for Legal Affairs Dona Cornell said, but did not elaborate.

Once his term expires, Rudley will return to his previous role as Vice Chancellor and Vice President of Finance and Administration. Jim McShan, the interim vice chancellor and vice president of Finance and Administration, will return to his previous position as associate vice chancellor and vice president of Finance.

Rudley will stay in office until January when Khator is expected to take over the presidency.

Under section 51.913 of the Texas Education Code, the board must announce its finalists before a final vote is taken to employ a candidate. The final vote on the finalist is taken 21 days after the initial announcement, and the board will have a meeting on Nov. 5 to approve Khator as the new president and chancellor.

During the search, the candidates were judged on overall leadership, external and internal communication skills, academic experience and personality traits, according to a summary of leadership qualities the committee used as criteria to narrow the amount of nominees. The personality traits sought are integrity, common sense, creativity and a sense of humor.

Members of the search committee said the majority agreed to choose Khator as a finalist for her experience in different leadership roles in business, social and governmental aspects, Hermes said.

"We were looking for someone that had the leadership skills necessary to take the University of Houston to flagship level," Hermes said after the meeting. "It takes an extremely well-rounded person to do that, and she was the candidate that had all of those qualities."

Faculty Senate President Joseph Kotarba said that the selection committee spent considerable time during the five-month search considering the criteria in order to come to a consensus.

"We feel she has the type of skills and experience to lead the University," he said.

Kotarba said that Khator will be valuable because of her experience at USF, which is similar to the UH System because it is composed of four campuses.

"As president of the Faculty Senate, I was also pleased to learn that she served as faculty senate president, too," he said about her qualifications after the meeting.

Student Government Association Vice President Samuel Dike, the only student member on the committee, said that he hopes to have an open line of communication with Khator. Dike said he wants her to address student concerns such as affordability at UH and the resolution of financial aid issues once her term begins in January.

Vice President for University Advancement Michael Rierson, a committee member, said that once in office, Khator would understand and act according to what the community and UH System need in terms of University involvement.

"She's a goal setter," Rierson said.

In other business, the board appointed Karen Clarke, who arrived from the University of Miami's university advancement division, as associate vice president for University Communications. Wendy Adair, who formerly held the position, took the role of associate vice president of Development Communication on Monday.