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'About 90' presidential candidates narrowed to 7

Bowers a finalist for U of Maine post

By CATHY KRADOLFER
Montana Kaimin News Editor

University of Montana President Richard Bowers is one of seven finalists for the job of president at the University of Maine at Orono.

Leonard Harlow, director of public information at the Maine school, confirmed yesterday that Bowers was chosen on Feb. 21 from a field of about 90 candidates as a finalist for the post at the Maine campus. The committee hopes to make a final selection by the May meeting of its Board of Trustees, a board similar to the Montana Board of Regents. Bowers will be interviewed at the university sometime in the next two months.

Bowers, whose one-year contract with the Board of Regents will expire June 30, 1980, said in an interview yesterday that he did not apply for the position but was nominated for it last fall when the University of Maine began accepting applications for the post.

Bowers said that he did not withdraw his name from consideration for the post when notified of his nomination because he considered it in his "professional interest to look at other available opportunities." In a handwritten, photocopied statement Bowers said he prepared for being notified of his selection as a finalist in February, he said he may look at other opportunities this year or in the future. But he added that does not imply that he wants to leave the University of Montana.

He said his being a candidate for the presidency is "not an unusual situation." Bowers said he has been nominated for positions before but has always withdrawn his name from consideration in attempting to fill vacancies at universities, search committees asking him for nominations from alumni, for example, as well as for applications.

Bowers said he was nominated for the position by "someone I would not want to say who." Last spring, during a meeting at which Bowers was questioned about the possibility of leaving UM for another job, he told the regents that he did not intend to apply for jobs elsewhere. When asked if anything had happened in the last year to make him consider the job in Maine, Bowers said: "I've served one more year as president of this university. He added it had been a "busy year." Bowers said that being nominated for the position does not mean he is actively seeking employment elsewhere. But when asked if he had applied to other schools, Bowers said that he "would not want to say anywhere" and refused to comment further.

Harlow said that Allan Vannini, director of development and executive director of the UM Foundation, had been notified of Bowers selection as a finalist Feb. 21.

Contacted by telephone yesterday, Vannini, whose job includes supervising information services, said that he had not been notified of Bowers' selection as a finalist.

The head of the University of Maine's 21-member search committee said yesterday that he talked to the finalists in February and asked them then to make a definite commitment to come for interviews in the spring. James Hamilton, professor of political science, said he told the finalists that once they agreed to come for an interview, their names would be made public.

Bowers said he has told very few people involved with UM about his selection as finalist and had

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Wednesday, March 12, 1980 Missoula, Mont. Special Edition

Maine announcement surprises faculty, students, administrators

By EILEEN SANSOM
Montana Kaimin Senior Editor

AND
CATHY KRADOLFER
Montana Kaimin News Editor

University of Montana faculty, student leaders and administrators expressed surprise yesterday at news that UM President Richard Bowers is one of seven finalists for the position of president of the University of Maine at Orono. Of the seven people contacted by the Kaimin last night, only Patricia Douglas, vice president for fiscal affairs, had been told by Bowers that he was being considered for another position. Except for Douglas, Vice President of Academic Affairs Donald Halbe and Walsh, all those interviewed said they thought that Bowers being considered as a finalist for a presidential position at Maine would improve faculty morale. Bowers also said that the announcement would not impair Bowers' ability to work with the faculty because the president's contact with the faculty has been minimal in the past.

Richard Solberg, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said that because of the recent Faculty Senate "no confidence" vote in Bowers, Bowers' position as a finalist for the post at the University of Maine would improve faculty morale.

My reaction is what you would expect after spending a lot of time and effort to put pressure on him to resign," said George Woodbury, former president of the Faculty Senate who resigned Feb. 8, said that Bowers' status as a finalist "comes as a complete surprise." He added that his reaction is "is what you would expect after spending a lot of time and effort to put pressure on him (Bowers) to resign." Woodbury said that the announcement of Bowers' candidacy for a presidential position at Maine will improve faculty morale. Bowers also said that the announcement would not impair Bowers' ability to work with the faculty because the president's contact with the faculty has been minimal in the past.

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However, Curtis said that in his recent first-hand experience with Bowers, the president "performed really well for the university.

Holgquist, former ASUM president, said that Bowers being considered for the University of Maine post.

But, Holquist said, "I would hope he would stay here through the Legislature" so that Bowers could defend UM's budget during the next session.

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"Despite persistent speculation to the contrary, University of Montana President Richard Bowers told The Missoulian Thursday that he is not seeking employment elsewhere.

... When asked if he is keeping an eye out for other jobs, he replied, 'If the Board (of Regents) renews my contract, I'll be here.' He said he does not intend to apply elsewhere.

—The Missoulian

Last summer, the Board of Regents did renew Richard Bowers' contract, which is now due to expire June 30.

Yet sometime in fall of 1979, Bowers was nominated as a candidate for the president of the University of Maine at Orono.

Nominating candidates for positions at other universities is not a common practice, but the nominee is always left with the option of turning down the nomination and withdrawing his or her name from consideration for the post. But Bowers did not turn down the nomination. And when notified that he was a finalist and given the choice to withdraw, Bowers did not, he agreed to an interview at the University of Maine, as did the other finalists.

This development seems, at the least, rather odd in light of Bowers' apparent commitment to UM. It becomes even odder yet when the meat of this information must come from the University of Maine — rather than from Bowers — and that an anonymous source must call long distance to inform the Kaimin that the UM president is a finalist for the presidency of another university.

It is not a question of whether Richard Bowers has the right to seek employment elsewhere — administrators and faculty in higher education often are drawn elsewhere to new challenges, higher pay or more desirable working conditions. Bowers has every right to take part in this practice.

But why must Bowers and the UM administration keep this information under wraps? Why must he sign a prepared statement, explaining his position, buried on his desk until a reporter asks him about it?

What does he say that his finalist position "does not imply that I am seeking to leave the University of Montana," and then accept the invitation to an interview in Orono, Maine, this spring? Was this decision made so ambiguously about such an allegedly straightforward practice?

Why must such a clandestine atmosphere hang over Main Hall?

No one answer exists for all of these questions. Only one man can answer them, and that man, as has been his habit in the past, has waited until the last possible minute to release a pre-written statement about an important development that he has been aware of for some time.

A university president, the "leader" of an institution, should be conducting duties and activities relating to his job in an open, honest manner. He should not fear criticism or misinterpretation of his acts — it is his job to lead.

The administration of this university apparently feels that the way to improve UM's "tamished" image is to cover any possibly negative developments at the university with a cloak of ambiguity and secrecy.

This is no way to improve an image. It creates only a facade. Secrecy and evasiveness imply that something is wrong. Bowers did nothing to fix it, because of fear of its effect on public opinion.

No one doubts that some crucial things are awry at UM — decreasing enrollment, faculty cuts, a tightening economy and budget, a student and faculty morale that is on the final list for a job.

But the situation becomes even worse when the administration persists in secrecy, for example:

- when the "leader" doesn't reveal that he is a finalist for another job.
- when he does not even notify professors, until it occurs, that their positions are under consideration for elimination.
- when a reshuffling of top employees in the admissions office comes as a "complete shock" to those involved.

John Milton said back in 1644 that "the fear of other eyes slanders my right, and of other tongues cheats and dupest me.

The cornerstone of a university is its philosophy of open government, open function in an atmosphere of openness and honesty, which allows criticism, new ideas and intelligent compromise to flourish.

This atmosphere must also encompass the administration.

Mike Dennison