University to create new government relations position

Increasing importance of legislative issues in era of term limits cited

(COLUMBUS) – Ohio State interim president Edward H. Jennings said today that he will ask the university’s board of trustees to approve establishment of a new position, vice president for government relations, at the board’s September 6 meeting.

William J. Napier, currently special assistant to the president for government relations and secretary of the board of trustees, will serve in the position in an acting capacity. Jennings said that Napier is a candidate to fill the position permanently.

“Increasingly, government issues at the federal, state and local levels are affecting higher education in a critical way, which means we must take a more focused and dedicated approach,” Jennings said. “In addition, the nature of our working relationship with the Ohio General Assembly has grown more complex and time demands have increased, especially as term limits have become a reality. In this era of constant turnover, it is more important than ever that we take the time to work with legislators to explain the university’s priorities and their benefit to the state of Ohio.”

Napier has worked in government relations in higher education since the late 1970s. “The challenge of term limits, with officials moving in and out of public life, makes it even more important that we continue to build and maintain strong relationships with our political leaders,” he said.

Board Chair James F. Patterson said the trustees are supportive of Jennings’ efforts to enhance the university’s government relations activities and his asking Napier to assume the expanded responsibilities. “Bill’s experience will be of enormous benefit in this critical area,” he said.

Jennings said that in his new capacity, Napier would relinquish his role as secretary of the board. Jennings said that an announcement regarding Napier’s replacement in that role would be made at a later time.
2-2-2 Napier appointment

Napier has worked for four Ohio State University presidents – Harold L. Enarson, Jennings, E. Gordon Gee and William E. Kirwan – in government relations and executive assistant capacities. From 1984 to 1996, he was vice chancellor for external affairs for the Ohio Board of Regents, and served as acting chancellor for a period in 1995. He also has held elective office in Upper Arlington, serving as vice mayor from 1996 to 1998, and as a city council member from 1987 to 1998.

He serves on the Midwest Higher Education Commission, appointed by then-Gov. George V. Voinovich and re-appointed by Gov. Bob Taft. He also serves as the commission’s treasurer. Napier also is on the board of trustees of the Mount Carmel College of Nursing and the Ohio Children’s Alliance (formerly the Ohio Hunger Task Force).

Napier earned a Ph.D. in political science from Ohio State. He also earned a bachelor of arts degree from Maryville College, Maryville, Tenn.; a master of science in city planning from the University of Tennessee; and a master’s degree in public administration from the University of Alabama.

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*Editor’s Note: A photo of Dr. Napier can be emailed upon request.*