

Opinion: Higher education in Nevada shouldn't bow to bullies

By J. Patrick Coolican, Las Vegas Sun

The Redfield name can be seen all over campus at UNR. The Nell J. Redfield Foundation has given about \$40 million during the past three decades for gems such as the auditorium in the math and science building, a student health clinic and the Redfield Theatre.

So when a director of the foundation, Gerald Smith, wrote a letter to the Board of Regents recommending that interim UNR President Marc Johnson be appointed president permanently, no doubt regents noticed.

The foundation went one step further, however, warning of consequences if Johnson wasn't appointed.

"Should the Regents select a stranger to fill the vacancy, there can be no assurance that current funding discussions will continue or that the projects currently being considered for funding will receive support in the future," the letter said.

More than one regent found the letter threatening.

Dr. Mark Doubrava voted for Johnson and called him a "capable individual who will do a very good job." (The point here isn't about Johnson, who by all accounts is very capable.)

But Doubrava also said he found the letter "threatening" and reflective of a process that "appeared almost orchestrated" to anoint Johnson. The letter was dated April 5, one day after UNR boasted of receiving a \$1.6 million gift from the foundation for the medical school.

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