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List of Finalists Submitted for New SUNY Chancellor

By [MARC SANTORA](#)

After more than a yearlong search for a new chancellor to lead the [State University of New York](#), a panel has submitted a list of finalists to Gov. [David A. Paterson](#), who is expected to meet with the candidates during the next two weeks before selecting one, according to education and state officials.

The search for a chancellor comes as SUNY, the nation's largest public university system, is facing the biggest budget cuts in its history and trying to address the "grave concerns" expressed by a high-level state commission this summer about the quality of many of its schools.

Several people involved in the selection process, who spoke on the condition that they not be named because they were not authorized to discuss it, said that more than one promising candidate had withdrawn because of the precarious situation, and that the process had also been stalled by political turmoil in Albany and internal disagreements. [Carl T. Hayden](#), chairman of SUNY's board of trustees, praised the interim chancellor, Dr. John B. Clark, and said no one was happy the search had lasted this long.

"I think we have had an interim chancellor in place longer than the board would have liked," he said. "Longer than John Clark would have liked."

Dr. Clark, a former investment banker who previously served as interim president of SUNY's Plattsburgh campus, did not respond to a telephone message on Monday.

The selection process, as well as the budget, are likely to be areas of focus when the trustees meet in New York City this week.

SUNY, a sprawling institution with 64 campuses and nearly half a million students, has an operating budget of \$10 billion, \$3.5 billion of which comes from the state. Mr. Paterson proposed about \$40 million in cuts in April, and more recently called for a \$96 million reduction; in all, education officials say the difference between last year's state grant and this year's totals \$210 million.

At a news conference on Monday, the leaders of seven SUNY campuses said that the budget situation would make it hard for the system to recruit and retain the top candidates.

"That's because of the budget cuts," said Deborah Stanley, the president of SUNY Oswego. "And it's because of the lack of investment. It's also, probably, because of a lack of vision for the future as to what higher education, especially public higher education, means and what its mission is."

One member of the board, speaking on the condition of anonymity for fear of seeming critical about the selection process, acknowledged that the budget problems had "caused some people to reconsider and withdraw," but said that "the people we were most intensely interested have not gone anywhere."

A spokesman for Governor Paterson said the cuts were painful but necessary as the state sought savings throughout its budget.

Mr. Hayden and others declined to identify the finalists or say how many there were.

In addition to the budgetary challenges, disagreements over qualifications have slowed the selection process. Given the outsize role that state government plays in SUNY's budget and other matters, some have argued that the candidates' fluency in navigating Albany might be more important than academic credentials. "We are looking at traditional and nontraditional candidates," said Mr. Hayden, who is also the head of the search committee.

Mr. Hayden, like other members of the board, was appointed by former Gov. [Eliot Spitzer](#) and he acknowledged that the turmoil surrounding Mr. Spitzer's resignation in the midst of scandal slowed the search down during the summer.

"But there have been no time-outs," he said. "We have been pressing ahead. And I don't think the process has been unduly attenuated."

It is better to take some extra time, he said, and ensure that the job goes to the right person.

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