

Athletic Director Choice Reflects Bar Going Up at NMSU

BY MICHAEL V. MARTIN

President, New Mexico State University

The editorial regarding the appointment of McKinley Boston as New Mexico State University's athletic director does, in my view, a disservice to the truth — and, thus to your readers — in several respects.

For the record, here's how we appointed the new athletic director.

A fully independent committee chaired by Charley Johnson — professor of chemical engineering and former NMSU and NFL football player — attracted, evaluated and screened a pool of 47 applicants for the position. The committee included Jack Thomas, chair of the NMSU Faculty Senate; Troy Franklin, director of NMSU Black Programs; Patsy Torres, administrative assistant to the NMSU basketball team; Cameron Wright, president of NMSU's student-athlete advisory committee; John Papen, Las Cruces business leader; and Dennis Latta, head of the New Mexico Sports Authority and former sports writer for the Journal.

The committee delivered to me a list of four finalists. One withdrew upon hearing his name would likely become public. I interviewed the

other three, but not alone.

To ensure balanced consideration, the interview process included: Provost William Flores, Senior Woman Administrator Maria Roth, NMSU Regents Robert Gallagher and Steven Anaya and Las Cruces business leader John Hummer. I also sought and received valuable input from Rudy Davalos, athletic director at the University of New Mexico.

Be assured that this committee was not and could not be influenced by me or anyone else. Another candidate withdrew very shortly after the interview, again so as not to jeopardize his current position. While I made the final decision to bring Boston to campus, I drew heavily on the advice of this interview panel.

It is true; I knew Boston from our days at the University of Minnesota. I doubt he would have been an applicant had he and I not been acquainted. But his inclusion among the finalists was entirely independent of our past relationship.

A careful journalist could confirm all of this with members of the Search and Screen Committee.

Along with clearing Boston's record with the NCAA, I discussed his record, his character and his capabilities with Robert Bruininks, current

president at Minnesota, who was provost when the basketball scandal unfolded. I also discussed Boston's involvement with Robert Jones, a University of Minnesota vice president and a person well informed about the issues at the time.

They and I will assert that Boston's failure was one of being too trusting. Nowhere in the very thorough NCAA investigation was Boston implicated in any cheating.

Moreover, during his early service as athletic director at Minnesota, he oversaw not only competitive but also academic improvement. It's worth noting that Boston is currently a consultant to the University of Minnesota.

Our independent committee of highly respected professionals selected a strong slate of finalists for our athletic director position. With input from informed and insightful participants, I appointed an experienced, respected administrator, educator and community leader to an important position at NMSU. The primary criterion in the decision-making process was to make the best choice for the university.

By the time this article hits print, it is likely another important decision will have been made: the choice for football coach. We will use that same criterion.

I am very proud of the process and the outcome. Be assured: Time will demonstrate our decision is well founded.

The 37 percent success rate we achieved over eight years in our football program is not consistent with NMSU's commitment to excellence in all we do. Our goals are to compete in conference championships, to earn bowl bids and to achieve academic excellence.

Boston himself has outlined the challenges he expects to meet as our new athletic director. They include challenging our coaches to be true educators, to recruit student athletes who will meet the academic challenges of NMSU as well as its competitive expectations, and to exhibit good sportsmanship.

We at NMSU welcome the readers of the Journal — as well as people throughout the state — to watch as we raise the bar academically and competitively in the coming years. As we move forward from the immediate issue related to athletics, I plan to share with you the many other exciting things happening at your land-grant university.

Ultimately, we will be welcoming you to join us in celebrating the successful completion of those challenges.