



THE BUZZ

From the staff of the Tampa Bay Times

FSU search committee cancels John Thrasher interview



Tia Mitchell, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

Tuesday, June 3, 2014 8:25pm

From the News Service of Florida:

A committee looking for a new president for Florida State University will now cast a net that extends beyond powerful state Sen. **John Thrasher**, the head of the panel announced late Tuesday.

Ed Burr, chairman of the FSU Presidential Search Advisory Committee, said an outpouring of interest in the position led to the decision to delay the conversation with Thrasher, which was scheduled for June 11. The St. Augustine Republican and rabid FSU alumnus has been considered the front-runner for the position, particularly after the committee voted last month to "pause" its process and interview only Thrasher before moving forward.

At the time, members of the committee said Thrasher's desire for the position had kept other potential candidates from applying. But the move to limit the search upset students and faculty members, and a protest was planned for the day of the interview.

Since then, Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice **Ricky Polston**, state Rep. **Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda**, D-Tallahassee, and others have put their names forward as candidates for the presidency.

In a message to committee members, Burr wrote that "recent events have made me increasingly optimistic that a traditional search process now appears more feasible than anticipated at our last meeting."

"Since the meeting," he continued, "we have received applications from several additional candidates. This has persuaded me that allowing this phase of the search to evolve before conducting any interviews would be most effective."

Burr said the committee will still meet June 11 to consider an application deadline for the position.

Thrasher, an influential figure in state politics who served as House speaker from 1998 to 2000 and had once been seen as a potential Senate president, currently serves as chairman of the Senate Rules Committee. He also is chairman of Gov. **Rick Scott**'s re-election campaign and previously served as chairman of the Republican Party of Florida.

But his opponents have pointed to Thrasher's lack of an academic background and his legislative record, which includes voting to largely eliminate teacher tenure.

Thrasher, in his letter of interest for the job, expressed his commitment to "academic freedom" at his alma mater and an intention to support programs that promote diversity, "placing an emphasis on having a student body, staff, and faculty that represent Florida."

FSU Provost **Garnett Stokes** has been serving as the institution's interim president.

The university is looking to replace former President **Eric Barron**, who stunned the FSU community when he agreed in February to take the same position at Penn State.



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