

Officials abandon protocol, give job to Habat

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Sweet

University officials last week bypassed their own protocol by failing to conduct a national search for the position of administrative vice president. Instead, they put John Habat, a long-time associate of YSU President David Sweet, in the job.

Habat joined YSU in July 2000, the same time that Sweet took over as President. Habat and Sweet met over 22 years ago, when Sweet worked in the urban program at Cleveland State and Habat worked for George Voinovich, who was then Mayor of Cleveland.

When Sweet took the position as president of YSU, he called Habat to join him. Habat has been serving as special assistant to the YSU president earning \$120,134 per year. Habat's new salary won't be set until July 1.

Sweet said he was the one who recommended waiving the national search, "Habat is a known commodity. His responsibilities warrant him for vice president. There was no search because Habat has demonstrated the capabilities to do the position," said Sweet.

Six of the university's trustees agreed with Sweet's recommendation to put Habat in the job without a national search. One trustee, Dr. Hai-Shuih Wang, voted against the recommendation, saying he

he wanted a national search.

Habat replaces Dr. G.L. Mears, who has served as an executive vice president and recently retired after 22 years with the university. Sweet said he has reassigned duties for the university's five vice presidents as part of his ongoing effort to establish the university's top administration.

Thomas Maraffa, professor and chair of geography, will take over Habat's former position as special assistant to the President, a position Sweet said does not require a national search. Sweet said he has the right to appoint the person for the position.

Maraffa will also maintain his current position as director of faculty relations.

"The (director of faculty relations) position is defined in the contract as someone who will participate in the grievance process and make judgment about the validity of a grievance in the pre-grievance stage."

Dr. Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, a member of the YSU-OEA faculty negotiating team, said he has some concerns about the recent changes.

Palmer-Fernandez said Maraffa would not be able to maintain a neutral position as director of faculty relations while holding the position as special assistant to the president.

"Maraffa's position as director of faculty relations is a position of neutrality in conflict. The fact that he is going to hold both positions undermines any possibility of impartiality in resolving conflict between faculty and administration."

Sweet said he believes Maraffa's relationship with the

faculty will help. "Maraffa has an excellent look which will be an important, strong link with the faculty. Maraffa will serve as good communication," Sweet said.

Palmer-Fernandez said he also questions why a national search was not completed and why minorities weren't considered.

"They're all white guys. What happened to diversity?" Palmer-Fernandez asked. "I'm extremely disappointed that the Sweet administration didn't do a national search for any minority candidates. It makes me question their public commitment to diversity. I have no objections to the persons themselves who were appointed, but to the procedures and lack of minorities in these positions."

Sweet said Habat has previously been trained as a lawyer, held responsibilities in the Cleveland City government, and held management positions in the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce.

Habat said he is "absolutely excited about the job and hopes to keep things running as smoothly as in the past."

Sweet said it has not been determined yet whether raises would accompany the new positions for Maraffa and Habat. "When a person takes on additional responsibilities, they should be compensated."

Palmer-Fernandez commented that, "given these new promotions, it does not appear that the administration is short on money."

The board of trustees must approve Habat as a university vice president. The next board of trustees meeting is scheduled for 3 p.m. June 28.