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## Our view: Erie values its college presidents

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ERIE TIMES-NEWS

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The influence of college presidents reaches beyond campus boundaries. That's why we'll watch with interest as Gannon University and Edinboro University of Pennsylvania search for successors for two presidents who helped to make the Erie region a better place.

Antoine Garibaldi, Ph.D., led Gannon for nine and a half years before accepting the presidency at the University of Detroit-Mercy. Under Garibaldi, Gannon expanded its campus, restored a number of historic Erie buildings, created mentors for youngsters and added a doctoral program in leadership.

Garibaldi's own academic research focused on the need to expand educational opportunities for black males, to reverse negative trends in dropouts, suspensions and expulsions in high school. "Colleges and universities can play a major role in increasing the academic achievement and college attendance rates for both black males and other high school students," he wrote in a Jan. 17, 2010, Op-Ed column.

After four years, Jeremy Brown, Ph.D., leaves Edinboro on May 31 to head Dowling College in Long Island. With his doctoral degree in physics and his experience as a professor at Ivy League institutions, Brown boosted Edinboro's academic reputation, increased enrollment, added building projects and bolstered fundraising. An annual scholarship luncheon in his name brought big-name speakers to the Erie Bayfront Convention Center every March: Dean Kamen, inventor of the Segway Personal Transporter, in 2008, followed by Michael Uslan, executive producer of six "Batman" movies; Jerry Greenfield, co-founder of Ben & Jerry's ice cream; and on this past Wednesday, former CIA operative Valerie Plame Wilson.

Edinboro is now searching for its 17th president in the school's history. Gannon has promised that a new president will be chosen by July 1. In previous searches for presidents, at public or private schools, the schools have revealed their lists of finalists. That helps the public to feel included in the search process, and hints at the tone and direction the new president will set.

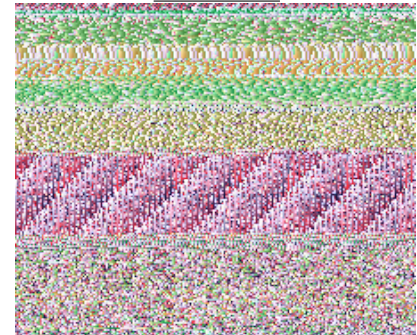
These new presidents will face challenges. Edinboro's president will be dealing with a squeeze on finances. Even if the Legislature doesn't go along with Gov. Tom Corbett's proposed 50 percent cut in funding for the State System of Higher Education, the state budget deficit dictates that some type of cuts are likely. Gannon's president will assume a job in an urban setting where Erie is poised to move forward with a revitalized downtown.

Whichever candidates are chosen, we welcome them into the academic fold of the Erie region, where all five undergraduate colleges -- Allegheny, Mercyhurst College, Gannon, Edinboro and Pennsylvania State University, including Behrend, are regularly ranked among the best colleges in the country by U.S. News & World Report.


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