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## Change in leaders for UMass trustees

### New chairman picked by Baker

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By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JANUARY 26, 2015

Governor Charlie Baker on Monday tapped a new chairman of the University of Massachusetts board of trustees as it prepares to launch a search for the next president of the five-campus system.

Baker selected current member Victor Woolridge as chairman, replacing Henry M. Thomas III, who stepped down as chairman but will remain on the board.

“Victor brings strong business and financial



EDWIN AGUIRRE/UMASS LOWELL

**The trustees' main focus will be replacing outgoing president Robert Caret.**

experience to this important job, along with a deep-seated commitment to the success of UMass and a personal understanding of its potential to transform lives,” Baker said in a statement.

“He brings a clear strategic vision for leveraging the entire UMass system to fulfill its promise for academic excellence, affordability, and economic impact.”

Woolridge, a Springfield resident and vice president of Cornerstone Real Estate Advisers, has chaired the UMass board’s Committee on Administration and Finance since 2011 and is an alumnus of the Amherst campus.

In a phone interview Monday, Woolridge expressed gratitude.

“I’m very appreciative of Governor Baker and Lieutenant Governor [Karyn] Polito for thinking of me as highly as they have for putting me in this position, as well as Secretary of Education [Jim] Peyser,” he said.

As chairman, Woolridge will be charged with leading the effort to form a committee that will search for a replacement for outgoing president Robert Caret, who said last month that he plans to leave this summer to head the University of Maryland system.

“That is our first priority,” Woolridge said.

A preliminary list of search committee members has been developed and expects that committee to be finalized within in a matter of days, he said.

Woolridge praised Thomas for his leadership as chairman and Caret for his tenure as president.

“Those are really big shoes to fill,” he said, adding that in addition to the presidential search he hopes to help the system tackle potential challenges related to the state budget and to explore ways to improve in other areas.

In his resignation letter to Baker, Thomas, who was appointed by former governor Deval Patrick and has led the 22-member board for 2½ years, said he wanted to give the new governor the chance to pick his own leader.

“After a period of reflection and consideration, I have determined that it is appropriate to offer you my resignation from the chairmanship of the University of Massachusetts board of trustees, so that you and the members of your team will be able to fill the position with the appointee of your choice,” Thomas wrote.

“I just thought it was the right thing to do,” Thomas said of his resignation in a telephone interview. “Every new governor coming in wants to have their own imprint.”

Thomas said he looks forward to continuing to serve on the board and working with Woolridge, whom he knows well.

They live near one another in Springfield, are family friends, and have worked professionally together.

“He has a solid background, he’ll do a great job, and I’m happy for him,” said Thomas. “He’s very thoughtful and he has experience in leadership roles that I think allow him to bring attributes to the table that will help UMass to continue on the roll its on now.”

Thomas wrote that he is honored to have been chairman during a period of growth and achievement for the university.

He cited the freeze on tuition and fees for in-state undergraduates the past two years, record enrollment, and a rising national reputation UMass.

“It has been a labor of love for me to serve as the chief volunteer for this great university system,” Thomas, who heads the Urban League of Springfield, wrote in the letter.

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