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Board of Higher Education chair to resign

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Frederick W. Clark Jr. will resign as chairman of the state's Board of Higher Education effective Dec. 6 - only 15 months after being appointed by Gov. Deval L. Patrick.

Senior vice president of Mirrione Realty Corp., real estate development firm located in Easton, Mass., Clark cited the economic status in the real estate industry as the reason for leaving the 13-member board.

"Although serious and sudden economic conditions in my private sector profession (real estate development) sadly prevent me from continuing on in my volunteer capacity as a member and Chairman of the Board of Higher Education, I leave with complete confidence that the Board is in a stronger, more relevant, position to positively impact opportunities for the higher education advancement of our students," Clark wrote in a resignation letter to the governor, dated Nov. 20.

He expressed gratitude for his opportunity to serve as chairman.

"As a grateful alum of the system myself, I understand completely that but for Massachusetts public higher education, hundreds of thousands of students would simply not have had an opportunity to reach their full intellectual, economic, social or cultural potential," Clark said. "To work with and speak for the heroic faculty, staff, and administrators of these fine institutions has been a high honor for me - for which I am deeply thankful."

He plans to resign Friday after a special board meeting to recommend former Northeastern University President Richard Freeland as the next commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

On Nov. 21, a search committee chaired by Clark unanimously recommended Freeland as the next commissioner, a nomination that must be approved by state Secretary of Education Paul Reville.

"Our likely commissioner recommendation to Secretary Paul Reville comes with the complete support of every constituent group within public and private higher education, and who carries an unprecedented level of experience and respect, thus guaranteeing that this candidate will have a profound and lasting impact in higher education policy and planning," Clark said.

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