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WASHINGTON UPDATE

■ Penn's Hackney is candidate to head NEH

■ Aide to Harkin may get Education Dept. job

Many lobbyists for the humanities predict that F. Sheldon Hackney will be the next chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Mr. Hackney, who has been president of the University of Pennsylvania since 1981, has reportedly told members of the Clinton Administration that he is interested in the position. He would not comment on the reports last week, but a university spokeswoman confirmed that Mr. Hackney is in the running for the position.

Martha Chowning, assistant to the chairman of the endowment and a liaison to the White House, said the President had not made a final choice for the job.

Mr. Hackney is an attractive candidate, the lobbyists say, because he is a respected scholar, has proved himself to be an able administrator, and has stood up strongly for freedom of expression. Under Mr. Hackney, the Institute for Contemporary Art at the university housed an exhibit of the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe. The museum's use of federal funds from the National Endowment of the Arts came under attack from

conservatives like Sen. Jesse A. Helms, a Republican from North Carolina, who said the work was "obscene" and "pornographic."

Mr. Hackney vigorously fought those charges, the lobbyists say.

Mr. Hackney is well regarded as an expert in the field of Southern history.

—STEPHEN BURD

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