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Tulane's ex-chief to head NEH

Washington bureau *6248AA*

WASHINGTON — Former Tulane University President Sheldon Hackney is in line to be the next chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, White House officials said.

Hackney served at Tulane from 1975 to 1981. For the past 12 years, he has been president of the University of Pennsylvania.

The Washington Post quoted White House sources Wednesday as saying he was President Clinton's choice to head the NEH.

The NEH's main function is to distribute millions of dollars in federal grants to American universities, museums, libraries and individuals.

It has at times been the focus of ideological controversy in recent years as debates over free-speech issues and curriculum changes have stirred the nation's campuses.

"I'm certain he would be outstanding in that position," said Tulane President Eamon Kelly, a friend of Hackney's.

Kelly said experience as a university president would help the new chairman address some of the more contentious issues in academia.

"Sheldon Hackney is one of the senior members of the cadre of university presidents and has a great deal of experience in dealing with these issues," he said.