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Napolitano to head UC system; move draws praise

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FROM REGISTER STAFF AND NEWS-SERVICE REPORTS

WASHINGTON – Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano's decision to leave the Obama administration to head the University of California system brought strong praise Friday from UC's student regent, a UC Irvine law school student.

Napolitano will be UC's 20th president and its first female leader.



U.S. secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, pictured here with the president in August 2011, is resigning Friday to become the next president of the University of California system.

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university."

Napolitano led the burgeoning Department of Homeland Security through a host of policy

"I think she is incredibly prepared to manage and administer the University of California," student regent **Cynthia Flores** said. "However, I think she may have a bit of a difficult transition."

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That difficulty, Flores said, could lie with her largest new constituency: students.

"I think she may not be as familiar with working toward and working with students," Flores said

Flores, who is a full voting member of the Board of Regents, said she hopes to work with Napolitano on diversity and access to higher education in the UC system.

"Now is the opportune time to construct goals or desired outcomes for the president," Flores said. "As she steps into her role, I think we all have a responsibility to shape her leadership legacy at the

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changes in the post-9/11 era. She is just the third person to lead the 10-year-old federal department.

She announced her plan to leave to senior staff Friday, the same day UC announced the appointment.

"The opportunity to work with the dedicated men and women of the Department of Homeland Security, who serve on the front lines of our nation's efforts to protect our communities and families from harm, has been the highlight of my professional career," she said in a statement.

"After four-plus years of focusing on these challenges, I will be nominated as the next president of the University of California to play a role in educating our nation's next generation of leaders."

"I thank President Obama for the chance to serve our nation during this important chapter in our history," Napolitano said, "and I know the Department of Homeland Security will continue to perform its important duties with the honor and focus that the American public expects."

The appointment was praised by California's Democratic governor and legislative leaders.

"Secretary Napolitano has the strength of character and an outsider's mind that will well serve the students and faculty. It will be exciting to work with her," Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. said in a statement.

State Sen. Leland Yee, D-San Mateo, long an advocate for transparency in UC finances, echoed Flores' urge for a student focus.

"I hope she keeps the needs of students, faculty and staff at the forefront after years of devastating tuition increases, questionable spending priorities and a general lack of transparency throughout the UC system," Yee said in a statement.

"I will be happy to work with her in her efforts to keep the UC's reputation as an affordable means of bringing quality education to all Californians."

Obama issued a statement commending Napolitano for "her outstanding work on behalf of the American people over the last four years."

"Janet's portfolio has included some of the toughest challenges facing our country. She's worked around the clock to respond to natural disasters, from the Joplin tornado to Hurricane Sandy, helping Americans recover and rebuild," he said. Obama also said the American people "are safer and more secure thanks to Janet's leadership in protecting our homeland against terrorist attacks."

Napolitano, a former Arizona governor and attorney general, was appointed by Obama in 2008. She had led the department through a series of policy changes with respect to protecting the public safety, including a focus on enforcing immigration laws.

Under her tenure, the Department of Homeland Security implemented a widespread policy of using prosecutorial discretion when arresting immigrants in the country without permission, saying her department needed to focus its scarce resources on criminals and those who posed a threat to public safety and national security. She also helped establish a plan to provide temporary relief from deportation for thousands of young immigrants who arrived in the United State illegally and who don't have legal status.

While no serious short list of names has emerged in Washington for Napolitano's permanent replacement, an official said some of the names circulating on Capitol Hill include former Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Thad Allen, retired Independent Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman and Maine Republican Sen. Susan Collins. Lieberman and Collins co-wrote the legislation that created the department a decade ago.

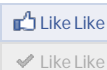
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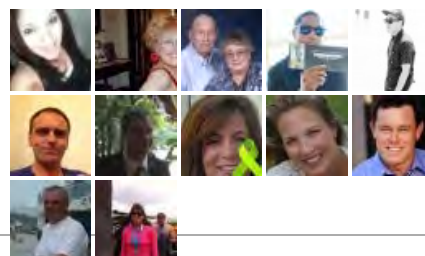


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