

Cornell president named new head of Smithsonian

March 10 2014, by Brett Zongker

The Smithsonian Board of Regents on Monday named Cornell University President Dr. David Skorton to lead the world's largest museum and research complex in the U.S. capital.

Skorton, who is a cardiologist, will replace Secretary Wayne Clough, who plans to retire in October after six years. The 64-year-old will be the first physician to lead the organization and its 13th secretary since 1846. For much of its history, the Smithsonian has been led by scientists. It is made up of 19 museums based primarily on the National Mall in the center of Washington, the National Zoo and nine research facilities around the world.

"Becoming a part of the Smithsonian is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to lead an institution that is at the heart of the country's cultural, artistic, historical and scientific life," Skorton said in a statement. "I am eager to work with the leaders of Washington's art, science and cultural centers to emphasize the critical importance of these disciplines."

Skorton, whose research focus is congenital heart disease, cardiac imaging and image processing, has led Cornell since 2006. He will begin his new position in July 2015. Skorton previously served as president of the University of Iowa for three years, where he was a faculty member for 26 years.

Smithsonian officials highlighted Skorton's support for industry-university partnerships and fundraising skills, noting that he has raised

more than \$5 billion during his time at Cornell and completed a billion-dollar campaign at University of Iowa, a first in the state.

"David Skorton has demonstrated keen vision and skilled leadership as the president of two great American universities," Supreme Court Chief Justice and Smithsonian Chancellor John Roberts said in a statement.

"His character, experience and talents are an ideal match for the Smithsonian's broad and dynamic range of interests, endeavors and aspirations."

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