"Let the word go forth," said former Gov. Louie B. Nunn one day last month as he presided over a meeting of Morehead State University's board of regents in a stuffy room packed with more than 100 professors, alumni and staff members.

"There shall be no more secrecy," he said in a booming voice as he looked around at the standing-room-only crowd.

The 10 regents had, at Nunn's suggestion, just ordered two copies of the board's meeting agendas to be placed in the library so that faculty or students could "sign it out, like any other book," before the meetings, Nunn said.

Such a gesture says something about the public tone by the regents these days at the 64-year-old tax-supported university, which is searching for its third president in three years. After bitter clashes involving regents, faculty members and the school's past two presidents, a new board is talking about trying to develop "stability," "direction," and "confidence" at Morehead State.

But difficult decisions concerning budget, enrollment and employment await the regents' choice to succeed Herb F. Reinhard Jr., who will conclude a two-year term as president June 30 and take the same job at 4,000-student Frostburg State College in western Maryland.

His tenure at Morehead involved dramatic changes in the school's leadership, creation of a Faculty Senate and a "town-gown" committee, continuation of an eight-year enrollment decline, and presidential clashes so intense with the regents that in January Gov. Martha Layne Collins asked all but the elected faculty and student members to quit.

Seven of the eight regents resigned and were replaced by a "blue chip" board, including Nunn and former Gov. Edward T. Breathitt.

Now, the new board has asked former Northern Kentucky University President A.D. Albright to serve six to nine months as interim president while a panel headed by Breathitt seeks a permanent successor.

"I'm not going to be looking back to the past," Nunn said last week. "It's been a chaotic situation at Morehead for the past several years." Saying some of the university's problems developed gradually, Nunn
added: "I don't think they came with Reinhard and I don't think they'll leave with him."

Reinhard, 54, came to Morehead from the presidency of Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania in 1984. Within weeks he began an administrative reorganization that included removal of four vice presidents, elimination of three deanships and consolidation of 25 academic departments into 17.

"I think we have made a lot of positive change at Morehead State," Reinhard said recently in an interview. "I think our students, generally, feel far more a part of the place and now realize that they are first-class citizens. I think that a number of our faculty and staff see that in so many areas there are better ways to do things. And we've got a new set of board members who are extremely committed to doing the best job they can . . ."

"So I think the potential is still there," Reinhard said. "I'm not nearly as optimistic about the ability to reach that potential as certainly as I was when I came. The attitudes here, and the inbreeding we have here, certainly has been a major problem. And I think to a certain extent will continue to be a major problem," he said.

Critics, although reluctant to speak publicly, have said Reinhard was abrasive and insensitive. They especially criticized the manner in which administrators were shifted around in Morehead's reorganization. Ironically, Reinhard's tough management style was applied at a university dominated for 20 years by another president who, it is generally agreed, used an iron hand in running the campus. Adron Doran, a flamboyant educator and former state House speaker, served from 1954 until 1976.

Doran was succeeded by a longtime Morehead vice president, Morris Norfleet, who encountered trouble in such matters as management of the school's athletics program and a 1983 censure of Morehead by the American Association of University Professors for the school's handling of a dispute over some faculty contract renewals.

But Reinhard, despite his birth in Covington, came to Morehead as an outsider, having spent his career in Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

"He might have opted for a slower, more gentler transition," said one observer who asked not to be identified. "He offended some people in the manner he transferred existing employees."

Reinhard, who noted that the administrative shakeup received unanimous approval from the regents with whom he later clashed, said he is proud of what it accomplished.

"I don't know when the timing is ever right to make major personnel changes," he said. "You will find that I, unlike some people, can separate friendships from my professional work."

"We've hired people regardless of who they were or where they were from . . . on the basis of their
credentials, not on the basis of who they knew. I'm very proud of the fact that for the past 23 months we broke the 'good ole boy' system," Reinhard said.

Harold Bellamy, a Morehead insurance agent who is vice president of the Morehead State University Foundation, which raises money from private donations for university-related programs, said Reinhard "had a lot of support" in the community.

"I think Dr. Reinhard was brought in with a mandate to make some changes," Bellamy said. "But that's in the past. (Now) we've got one of the strongest, best boards of regents probably in the history of Kentucky. And I think they will very definitely turn this thing around."

Such a turnaround will likely involve tough decisions by Morehead's new leadership in three areas.

Enrollment. For the past eight years, Morehead's enrollment has declined,

from 7,675 students, full- and part-time, in the fall of 1978 to 5,695 last fall.

W. Porter Dailey, vice president for administrative and fiscal services, said a projected 4 percent enrollment decline in 1985-86 turned out to be closer to 9 percent - and was a big cause of a $727,000 deficit that had to be overcome during the school year. Another 9 percent enrollment drop is projected for 1986-87.

Albright, who was asked May 16 to serve as interim president, said the declining enrollment "needs to be arrested as quickly as possible."

In addition, Albright said, some framework needs to be built within the university for two-year programs with open admissions. Such a framework could encourage student retention by offering assistance to those needing help in such basic skills as English and sciences.

Despite the enrollment drop, admission standards have changed and Reinhard cited such improvements as one of his accomplishments.

"When I came here, we were admitting students who never applied to Morehead State," he said. Students who take the ACT or SAT college admission tests are required to pick one or more colleges to which they would like their scores sent. "Any student anywhere who had their scores sent to Morehead State we automatically sent them a letter of acceptance. They had never filled out an application for admission." Now the university has minimum admissions requirements.

But, Reinhard said, recruitment is one thing; retention is another. He said 50 percent to 60 percent of entering students don't graduate four years later.

Money. Morehead's regents meet June 13 and must approve a $40 million operating budget. But enrollment declines have translated into declining tuition and housing revenue. That left Morehead State budget
planners earlier this year faced with the possibility of a $1.2 million shortfall in 1986-87. But a stopgap $500,000 appropriation, designed to make up for the decline in student enrollment, was approved by the 1986 General Assembly. And an $880,000 belt-tightening and increases in tuition and fees have been drawn up.

Dailey said the proposed budget includes funding for 62 fewer positions than existed last July. That 6.5 percent trimming was accomplished through attrition as well as discontinuance of 13 night assistant jobs.

But such budget cutting, which will undoubtedly continue, can be tricky. "If you get started cutting programs to address an enrollment decline . . . it's hard to go back in and reverse that enrollment decline," Dailey said.

Mission. Morehead State, as one of eight public universities in the state, is supposed to serve as a residential school for more than 20 counties in Northern and Eastern Kentucky. But Nunn, Albright and others repeatedly emphasized that the university's new leadership will have to concentrate on fine-tuning Morehead's mission.

"I think the No. 1 thing will be establishing some sense of direction and control," Nunn said. "Until we have some degree of understanding, of pride in the university, I don't think we can hold ourselves out to the community."

Yet, Nunn said, keeping the board's actions open and "cleaning up our own house" will enable the new president to concentrate on developing a better relationship with the region.

Albright said such liaison goes hand-in-hand with reversing Morehead's enrollment problems.

"This means work needs to begin in a concentrated fashion immediately to build a level of confidence in the university in the region - with public schools, community colleges, public officials such as county judges, mayors and legislators - so that they know where the university needs to go," Albright said.

Dave Bolt of Morehead, president of the university's alumni association, said he has been in contact with alumni who are concerned about the school's image.

"The thing you have to realize is that the alumni of an institution are affected as greatly as students, faculty and staff when there are problems at a university," Bolt said. "The alumni are out in the job market. The reputation of an institution affects their earning potential."

But Bolt said he was encouraged by the new board. "I think it is a critical time. And perhaps we have reached a turning point," he said.

Reinhard said he leaves for Frostburg State College in Maryland with the satisfaction that "Morehead State University will never be the same." He said he has talked during the past two years with people who favored changes at the school, but who "wouldn't speak up."
"But until a lot of people on and off the campus want the place to really reach the potential it has, I don't think it can. And I'm hopeful that those people now realize that."

Caption: File photo HERB F. REINHARD JR.: Cites campus problems of attitude and inbreeding

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