

UW System: Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs James Henderson retires, Karen Schmitt named interim

Posted on Monday, Apr 23, 2018

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James P. Henderson, Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs for the University of Wisconsin System, has announced that he will retire effective June 1, 2018.

UW System President Ray Cross announced today that Karen R. Schmitt will serve as interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. She begins her new post on June 1.

“Having the privilege to serve the System that provided the foundation for my academic career with a Ph.D. from UW-Madison in 1979 has truly been beyond anything I dreamed,” Henderson said. “The UW System is one of the premier state systems in the United States, and I hope that I’ve been able to make some contributions to its success. I must express my deep appreciation to President Cross for giving me this opportunity, to the Chancellors for their dedication to higher education in Wisconsin, and to the Provosts for being outstanding colleagues in tirelessly advocating for their faculty and students. Finally, I want to give my heartfelt gratitude to the members of the division of Academic and Student Success at the UW System. They provide outstanding support to academic achievement and

student success in Wisconsin, and it has been an honor to serve with them.”

“Jim has been a key member of leadership at the UW System and we have highly valued his insight and vision,” said President Cross. “He has focused his attention on helping our students succeed and growing the talent we need for Wisconsin. We wish the best for Jim and his family.”

Henderson joined the UW System in 2016, capping a career in higher education that spans nearly 40 years and seven states. He has been an important leader in the areas of academic program array, diversity and inclusion planning, data and policy analysis, faculty and staff development, student affairs, developmental education, and instructional technology.

Schmitt currently serves as the Provost and Vice Chancellor for UW Colleges. She previously served as Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and Vice Provost for Research and Sponsored Programs at the University of Alaska Southeast, as well as Dean of the Community and Technical College at the University of Alaska Anchorage. She has also held a number of research and science coordinator/manager positions at University of Washington, Exxon and ITT Antarctic Services.

“I am pleased to be joining President Cross in the UW System Administration and continuing to work with faculty, staff and students toward achieving the goals of the UW System restructuring,” said Schmitt, who grew up on a family farm outside Madison and earned an undergraduate degree in geology and geophysics from UW-Madison. “The pivotal role that the UW System plays in enhancing economic prosperity, sustaining community development, and increasing quality of life for the citizens of Wisconsin fuels my enthusiasm for taking on this challenge and for contributing to the future of the state that invested so much in my early education and success.”

“Karen brings a unique combination of leadership skills and expertise to this key position,” Cross said. “I am confident her background and experiences prepare her to work with receiving chancellors and provosts to implement our restructuring initiative. Strategic planning, a commitment to student success, and relationship-

building are among her many strengths, and we look forward to working with her to advance UW System's vision for the future."

Schmitt will serve as the chief academic officer for the UW System. Her areas of responsibility will include academic program array, diversity and inclusion planning, data and policy analysis, faculty and staff development, student affairs, developmental education, and instructional technology. She will also provide leadership in strategic planning and predictive analytics focused on talent development to support the current and future economic development needs of the state and nation.

Schmitt earned a Ph.D. in geological sciences from Columbia University and a Master's in geology from the University of Otago in New Zealand as a Fulbright Graduate Student Fellow.

- [CV for Karen R. Schmitt](#)
- [High-resolution photo of Karen R. Schmitt](#)
- [High-resolution photo of James P. Henderson](#)