

Wisconsin Public Media: Heather L. Reese named interim director

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Madison, Wis. – Heather L. Reese has been named interim director of Wisconsin Public Media (WPM), the division at the University of Wisconsin — Madison that oversees Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR) and PBS Wisconsin. The announcement follows the recent death of Director Gene Purcell who had served in the role since 2018. Reese has worked at WPM since 2010 and has served as associate director since 2020. Prior to that, she was the director of strategic initiatives and compliance.

“We’re all still grieving the sudden and tragic death of Gene, but it’s comforting to know that Heather is ready to step in as a leader. I can’t think of a better person to guide us through this transition,” UW-Madison Provost John Karl Scholz said. “Heather is uniquely qualified for this position. In addition to serving as WPM’s director of strategic initiatives and compliance for four years, she was project manager for the division during the successful transition back to UW-Madison from UW-Extension in 2018. I look forward to continuing to work with her in this new, interim role.”

As WPM’s interim director, Reese will oversee operations and administration of the university division and work in partnership with the Educational Communications Board (ECB), who maintains the transmission and distribution of public media in the state. “Heather is a great choice,” ECB Executive Director Marta Bechtol added. “She brings a wealth of experience with big, strategic projects and is a strong advocate for Wisconsin Public Media’s incredible journalism, education, entertainment and community service work.”

Reese is a Wisconsin native, a graduate of UW-Madison’s School of Law and a longtime supporter of The Wisconsin Idea — the belief that UW-Madison teaching,

research, outreach and public service should provide benefits beyond the classroom.

“WPR and PBS Wisconsin were founded on the principle that free and open access to information and education would make life better for everyone in Wisconsin,” Reese said. “Our mission has never been more vital and I look forward to sustaining that commitment during this transitional period.”

UW-Madison will provide updates about the status of a planned national search for the director of WPM when available.