

UW-Madison: Names Glenda Gillaspy Dean of Agricultural and Life Sciences

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MADISON — Plant scientist Glenda Gillaspy has been named the next dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

She has been a professor of biochemistry in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech since 1998 and head of the department since 2015.

After graduating from Auburn University, Gillaspy earned a doctorate in biochemistry from Case Western Reserve University and then joined the University of California, Berkeley as a National Science Foundation postdoctoral fellow. Her research program focuses on a signaling pathway in plants critical for their response to nutrients.

“We are thrilled to welcome Glenda to this important role,” says Provost Karl Scholz. “Her leadership, scholarship and dedication to students will ensure that the college continues to excel.”

As head of the Department of Biochemistry at Virginia Tech, Gillaspy led changes to the graduate program that doubled the number of graduate students while enhancing their professional opportunities. She developed a mentoring program to attract and retain new faculty, bolstering the research and teaching resources of the department.

“I am excited to join the vibrant community of students, staff and faculty within the college and the University of Wisconsin–Madison,” says Gillaspy. “The unique composition of departments and programs in the college, along with a history and

reputation of excellence, make CALS unique. These qualities position the college to take a preeminent role in solving complex problems facing our society with respect to food, health and sustainability, and to provide critical educational programs and experiential learning for our students.”

The university’s guiding philosophy of public service also makes UW–Madison feel like a perfect fit to Gillaspy, whose own outreach program using custom-made plants has reached thousands of high school students and their teachers.

“The Wisconsin Idea embodies an elegantly communicated sense of outreach and engagement that I have pursued in my own career,” she says. “I am looking forward to interacting with our diverse stakeholders and alumni. The connection and importance of CALS to the people of Wisconsin makes leading the college a very attractive opportunity.”

Thanks to the strength of past CALS leadership, Gillaspy says, she plans to foster the college’s established excellence in research, education and outreach — and to take advantage of those strengths to expand its impact on students.

In 2021, Dean Kate VandenBosch announced she would step down from her position at the end of the academic year. She has led the college since 2012, overseeing the launch of the Wisconsin Crop Innovation Center and the Dairy Innovation Hub. VandenBosch also led the comprehensive campaign for the college, raising more than \$166 million in private gifts.

“Let me express my deep appreciation for Kate VandenBosch’s leadership and service to UW–Madison,” says Scholz. “We are pleased that she’s agreed to stay on in the UW community over the next year while taking on some special projects in her home department of agronomy and beyond.”

Troy Runge, professor and chair in biological systems engineering, chaired a 16-member committee to identify VandenBosch’s successor.

Gillaspy will assume her new role on Aug. 4. The CALS dean is the chief academic and executive officer of the college, which includes 255 faculty members and more than 850 staff. CALS enrolls about 2,800 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate students and has a budget of more than \$200 million, approximately half of which comes from extramural support.