

May 18, 2021

**MSU Campus Community:**

Over the past two months our campus has engaged in a search for a new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs to replace the retiring Dr. Greg Russell. I believe we all have appreciated Dr. Russell's service to MSU in a number of areas, including that of Provost. His time in higher education spans 34 years and we wish him well in his retirement transition.

After conducting campus interviews, reviewing feedback forms, as well as speaking to various individuals to obtain additional verbal feedback, it is clear that there were two excellent finalists for the position and both of them should be commended for their time and energy spent with the various groups during the interviews. Each of the candidates did a good job interviewing and are valued at MSU. Additionally, I want to take the opportunity to thank the search committee members for their work in the process and their feedback.

Over the past two weeks I have been reviewing the search feedback forms from across campus, reviewed our University Strategic Plan, tried to forecast our upcoming needs, and reached out to almost thirty additional individuals privately at a variety of levels on their thoughts. All of these provided good input.

As a result of the compilation of the above, I am pleased to relay that we will be working with Dr. Tony Norman to transition into the role of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. His formal start date will be July 1, 2021, and over the next month he and Dr. Russell will be working to achieve as smooth a transition as possible.

Dr. Norman is relatively new to our campus, but has been in higher education in Kentucky for over 20 years. He has served as Dean of our Volgenau College of Education and begun a number of new initiatives. Prior to his role at MSU he was a longtime educator at Western Kentucky University holding the following positions in the College of Education and Behavior Sciences: Associate Dean for Retention, Persistence, and Degree Completion; Interim Director of the School of Professional Studies; Interim Department Head of Educational Administration, Leadership, and Research; as well as Professor and Director of the Educational Leadership doctoral program. Dr. Norman has been active in accreditation of education programs, and with grant and research production. He holds a doctorate from the University of Virginia in Educational Psychology.

As I stated previously we had two great finalists, and thus this was a difficult decision. I do want to publicly show appreciation and support to Dr. Laurie Couch for her energy and work in her current position. Dr. Couch has been very instrumental and effective in crafting our student success functions and has implemented many of the high impact initiatives that have helped raise our student retention rates. Likewise, she has done a great job co-coordinating our QEP, among other initiatives. Her work has not gone unnoticed and she has been a valued part of the academic affairs leadership.

With Dr. Norman transitioning into the Provost office over the summer, this will create a vacancy in his current role as Dean of the Volgenau College of Education. Because of time, we do not have the ability to conduct a normal search to fulfill this role for next academic year. Thus, I will be asking both Dr. Russell and Dr. Norman to work together to discuss with the College the appointment of an interim dean for the 2021-2022 year, along with how a search would then ensue over the course of next year.

Leading into the summer Dr. Russell will be working to lead the transition of these academic affairs units with the goal of it being as seamless as possible.

Thank you to everyone on our campus who participated in some way.

Jay Morgan  
President