

MSU: Next president hopeful on new role

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three-year contract are pending. "MSU made the right decision 11 years ago," when, after a deadlocked vote, the board chose McPherson over her, Simon said. "Three years from now, we will look back and say they made the right decision again."

Simon does have advantages coming into the job. She came to MSU in 1970 as a graduate student and knows MSU and Michigan.

She ran the 45,000-student university last year when McPherson went to Iraq to help rebuild the nation's economy. She's worked closely with him as he's drawn record donations and research dollars to the university.

"She is absolutely a proven commodity," Board of Trustee Chairman David Porteous said.

But she lacks the political connections and management experience of McPherson, who ran a bank and was second in charge of the U.S. Department of Treasury before coming to MSU.

Simon says she has learned much from working with McPherson.

"I've worked with and talked to a number of national and international individuals," Simon said. "There's a lot of publicness in the job of provost. It's simply not covered in the press."

Simon is both intellectual and practical, said Jean Golden, East Lansing's deputy city manager, who has worked with her to improve the often-strained relationship between the city and campus.

"She relies on science to make decisions," Golden said. "She looks at the data and the evidence."

Trustee Joel Ferguson, who voted 11 years ago to make Simon president, said Simon's experience compensates for her less-than-glossy image. "People say Lou Anna isn't charismatic. Her charisma is in her knowledge and her expertise."

English professor Lister Matheson, among the many who questioned the board's decision to choose Simon without considering others, said he thinks she

Lou Anna Simon file

- **Born:** Jan. 1, 1947
- **Family:** Husband Roy
- **Education:** Bachelor's in mathematics, Indiana State University, 1969; master's in student personnel and counseling, Indiana State University, 1970; doctorate in philosophy, administration and higher education, MSU, 1974.
- **Career:** Michigan State University provost and vice president for academic affairs, 1993-present; also has served as associate provost, assistant provost for general academic administration, assistant director of the office of institutional research and faculty member.

can make a good leader: "Lou Anna Simon and MSU are well-suited for one another."

To be successful, Simon must be adept at schmoozing with donors and navigating state and federal politics, said John DiBiaggio, a former MSU president who worked with Simon.

"It's a matter of developing those skills that are required," he said. "She's a quiet, reserved person. But she works very hard at what she does."

Staff writer Kevin Grasha contributed to this report. Contact Sharon Terlep at 377-1066 or sterlep@lsj.com

Simon brings ideas, McPherson says

By SHARON TERLEP
Lansing State Journal

EAST LANSING — After more than a decade of working with Lou Anna Simon as his second-in-charge, MSU President Peter McPherson championed the MSU provost as the best person to take over his job.

McPherson offers the following thoughts on Simon:

► **Why should Simon be the next president?**

► She's got a knowledge of the university that almost no president comes to a job with. She's a very strong administrator. She understands how pieces fit together and knows how to get the job done.

She is very much the land-grant person — deeply interested in land use, high schools and K-12 education. She sees MSU through this land-grant mission.

And she has lots of ideas. You've got to have new ideas because things keep changing.

► **What will be difficult for Simon as president?**

► She can't be the provost and



New leader: Michigan State University Provost Lou Anna Simon is congratulated Friday by President Peter McPherson after it was announced she had been chosen as MSU's next president.

CHRIS HOLMES
Lansing State Journal

the president. She just won't have time to do things she's been doing all these years and is so good at. She will now need to do the functions that I've had, and she'll have a provost who will do the things she's been doing. Some of that will be different because there's some outside engagements. This job is not just becoming a senior provost ... it's becoming a president.

► **What are the differences between you and Simon?**

► Her knowledge of the institution. The experience here. I brought a lot of experience in

managing huge institutions. She's had experience managing this institution.

We didn't always agree. When she doesn't agree, she tells you.

► **Will she have support from the faculty?**

► She has lots of support from faculty. The faculty is diverse. Budget cuts are hard. You can't be on the line reducing budgets and have everyone be happy.

There is a broad appreciation for her competence and commitment to this institution.

Contact Sharon Terlep at 377-1066 or sterlep@lsj.com.

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