

Board names Simon as MSU's 20th president



Photo by Kurt Stepnitz

Provost Lou Anna K. Simon speaks at the June 18 board meeting where she was unanimously selected as the president-

designate by the Board of Trustees. Donald Nugent, MSU trustee, is also pictured.

Tom Oswald

The MSU Board of Trustees unanimously appointed Provost Lou Anna K. Simon as the university's 20th president at the board meeting on June 18. Simon will lead in a three-year contract on Jan. 1, 2005.

"As we move forward from today, you have our collective hope that we will do all that we can for MSU so that three years from now, as we look back on this deci-

sion, we know that this was the right decision for Michigan State," said

tasks ahead."

As MSU's first female president,

"I've known Lou Anna for a long time and her commitment to MSU and higher education in Michigan is second to none. It is good to see women assuming leadership roles in so many institutions of higher education."

— Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm

Simon.

"I accept this new role with great confidence and enthusiasm for the

Simon joins a growing rank of women leading Michigan universities, including Mary Sue Coleman at

the University of Michigan, Judith Miller at Western Michigan University and Paula Cunningham at Lansing Community College.

"I think it's good that leadership roles have become more and more inclusive," Simon said, "and that we break down stereotypes that are often associated with the selection of leaders. But while I appreciate the importance of that, in some ways it's personally more significant for me to be the first person from my family to graduate from college so that I had the opportunity to be the first woman president of MSU."

Effective immediately, Simon will assume the title of president-designate, and will retain her title of provost in order to facilitate a smooth transition during the remainder of President Peter McPherson's presidency.

McPherson announced in May that he would step down Jan. 1 after 11 years at MSU's helm.

"Dr. Simon is the right person for this milestone in the history of our wonderful university," said David Porteous, chairperson of the MSU Board of Trustees. "She has the caliber; she has the vision and the qualities that will guide Michigan State."

Simon currently serves as MSU provost and vice president for academic affairs. At the time of her appointment as provost in 1993, she

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was among the youngest to hold such a position in the Association of American Universities (AAU) and is one of only 11 women holding the position of chief academic officer among the 62 leading research institutions in the United States and Canada that compose the organization.

Simon and McPherson, who served in their respective roles for 11 years, are the longest-serving president-provost team in the Big Ten. "Throughout our collective tenure, we've been sharing information on a wide variety of things that normally would be viewed as more under the presidential purview," said Simon. "So there won't be the usual expectation of being briefed afresh on issues as there would with someone coming in from the outside."

In addition to serving as provost, Simon has a distinguished history with MSU. After earning her doctorate in administration and higher education from MSU in 1974, she became a member of the MSU faculty and assistant director

of the Office of Institutional Research (now the Office of Planning and Budgets). From there, she moved into a variety of administrative roles, including assistant provost for general academic administration during the '80s and associate provost in the early '90s. She also serves as provost of the MSU College of Law.

Since 1999, Simon has been a member of the Executive Committee of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), an academic consortium of 12 major teaching and research universities in the Midwest, including the 11 institutions that compose the Big Ten, along with the University of Chicago. She was elected chairperson of the CIC in 2000, a position she currently holds.

"This is an important point in our history, a time of transition and change, both intellectually and fiscally," she said. "It also is a time of unusual opportunity and possibility. I am honored by the confidence that the board has placed in me and I will work tirelessly and passionately to keep MSU on the path of

excellence."

With her extensive administrative experience, active involvement in development activities and her leadership and participation in a variety of innovative initiatives across the mission, Simon has been responsible for the full range of academic and academic support programs at MSU. She is regarded nationally as a powerful advocate of a research-active, student-centered university that is an engaged partner with society, in the land-grant tradition.

Her publications, in texts such as "Serving Children and Families through Community-University Partnerships" and "Universities and Communities: Remaking Professional and Interprofessional Education for the Next Century," demonstrate Simon's continuing commitment to the promotion of university outreach ventures, especially those related to serving youth and families.

Most recently, she co-edited with Maureen Kenny, Karen Kiley-Brabeck and Richard Lerner the book "Learning to Serve: Promoting Civil Society Through

Service Learning," published in 2002 by Kluwer Academic Publishers.

In addition to earning a doctoral degree from MSU, Simon also holds a master's degree in student personnel and counseling, and a bachelor of arts degree in mathematics, both from Indiana State University.

Simon has taught graduate seminars in the College of Education on evaluation, planning and budgeting, and courses in statistical methods. In addition, she currently does a number of guest lectures in MSU courses, including Administration in Higher Education and Student Affairs in College Settings.

McPherson said he was pleased the board had chosen a "confident, experienced person who can do the job."

"There is great momentum here," he said. "So many people on this campus have worked hard to achieve so many things. With Lou Anna Simon as the next president, we can ensure that this momentum not only continues, but grows. She comes to this position with my

strong endorsement and recommendation."

During the next six months, Simon looks forward to conversations with members of the MSU community about their expectations and dreams for the university.

"I want a pulse-taking, idea-gathering process that perhaps would be more typical for someone coming in new to an institution," she said. "I have the advantage of already knowing where to park, where the buildings are and I know many of the cast of players by name. However, I don't want to miss the opportunity to really be able to mine people's ideas regarding the next piece of Michigan State's history. I think it's the opportunity to meet and talk with people, both to reminisce about the things that have made Michigan State a unique place and to try to build an excitement about Michigan State's future that will carry us through the next 50 years."

Additional background information can be found at <http://special.newsroom.msu.edu>