BUY PHOTO REPRINTS ONLINE
The right mortgage. PeoplesBank Member FDIC/Member DIF Equal Housing Lender
SUBSCRIBE TO THE GAZETTE ONLINE OR IN PRINT

Blogs

New Five Colleges leader's goal: grow stronger together

By THE DAILY HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE
Staff Writer

Email this page Printer-friendly version

Monday, May 4, 2009

1 2

AMHERST - As the current leader prepares to step down and another comes forth, the two agree that further collaboration is the key to success for the Five College consortium.

On Monday, the Five Colleges Inc.'s board of directors announced that the new executive director will be Neal Abraham, who is the current executive vice president, vice president for academic affairs, dean of faculty and professor of physics and astronomy at DePauw University in Greencastle, Ind.

Abraham will succeed Lorna Peterson, who is retiring after 29 years with the Five Colleges Inc., the last 19 of which she spent as executive director.

"In large part, I don't think it's what my ideas are. I think it's the shared ideas of the five colleges I'll be working with," Abraham said of his new role, which begins in August. "The big question is how can we make each of the institutions stronger by working together."

Both Abraham and Peterson said the struggling economy and a need for cuts can make the job more stressful, but also can bring an upside.

"The challenges of the economic downturn also create a great opportunity for the colleges to work closely together," said Peterson. "From all I have seen and hear, (Abraham) is an excellent candidate with exactly the kind of experience for the position."

The 43-year-old consortium, which encompasses Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke and Smith colleges as well as the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, has already began to look for and implement cost-reducing actions.

"Looking at ways to preserve strength in this economy is a great motivation for the schools to cooperate and share resources," Abraham said.

Besides the stress of the economy, Peterson said Abraham will face the challenge of implementing new technologies. In his 11 years in DePauw's senior administration, Abraham hired over half of the university's 228 faculty members, designed a faculty development and recognition program, oversaw expansion of DePauw's interdisciplinary programs and collaborated with nearby Wabash College.

"Neal's energy and dedication to DePauw and its educational mission have been instrumental in bringing this college to increasing national prominence in recent years," said DePauw President Brian W. Casey in a statement. DePauw is ranked 49th in the top 50 liberal arts colleges in the country by U.S. News and World Report.

He has also been a leader in consortia endeavors, since working early in his tenure at Bryn Mawr with colleagues at Haverford and Swarthmore colleges.

Popular stories
Smoking marijuana on Bliss Street
Deborah Tobin, longtime CDH nurse
District Courts
Blue Heron heaven: A visit to The Rookery
Michael Mickalunas, worked in construction

"The schools of the Five College consortium have long been models for those of us at other colleges and universities, and for me in particular, as we explore how to achieve closer and mutually supportive collaborations," said Abraham in a statement.

A summa cum laude graduate of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pa., Abraham received his doctorate in physics from Bryn Mawr College, where he taught for 18 years. Before arriving at Bryn Mawr, he taught at both Dickinson and Swarthmore colleges.

Earlier in his physics career, he visited Amherst College as a lecturer and chaired departmental review committees at both Smith and Mount Holyoke colleges.

As a physicist, Abraham is considered an international leader in the field of chaos and nonlinear dynamics, particularly in lasers and nonlinear optical systems. With research support from Research Corporation, the National Science Foundation and the Scientific Affairs Programme of NATO, he has published more than 200 scientific articles, many co-authored with undergraduate research collaborators.

"We are pleased that a leader of Neal Abraham's vision and considerable experience will be leading our consortium at a time when collaboration holds unprecedented potential for the strategic development of higher education," Carol T. Christ, president of Smith College and president of the board of directors of Five Colleges, said in a statement. "I speak for the presidents of all the colleges and the chancellor of the University of Massachusetts in saying how much we look forward to working with Neal on taking forward the groundbreaking work of Five Colleges."

Abraham will move to the Pioneer Valley with his wife, Donna Wiley, who is senior vice president and managing director of Grenzebach Glier and Associates.

Filed Under: **amherst** **business** **local**

Comments

Post new comment

Your name:
intern

Subject:

Comment: *

Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.

Allowed HTML tags: <a> <b> <i>   <code> <cite>   <img>

Lines and paragraphs break automatically.

More information about formatting options

Preview comment Post comment

Daily Hampshire Gazette © 2008 All rights reserved