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WKU names new provost

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Robert Fischer JR.

Submitted

Filling a vacancy to replace Western Kentucky University's acting provost, who is retiring, the university named Robert "Bud" Fischer Jr. as its next provost and vice president for academic affairs.

Fischer, the current dean of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, will replace Cheryl Stevens, who has served as WKU's top academic officer since April 2019. Stevens will step down as acting provost June 30 and retire at the end of the fall semester.

"Dr. Fischer has a record of success in elevating the universities where he has held leadership positions," WKU President Timothy Caboni said in a news release announcing the hire.

“His experience with applied learning, improvements in retention and graduation rates and familiarity with growing sponsored research all are relevant to continuing WKU’s climb to greater heights as we implement our strategic plan.”

Before joining MTSU in 2012, Fischer chaired the Department of Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and was associate chair of the Department of Biological Sciences at Eastern Illinois University as a tenured professor.

Fischer holds a Ph.D. in evolutionary biology from the University of South Carolina, a master’s degree in environmental biology from State University College at Buffalo and a bachelor’s degree in ecology from State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, N.Y.

In his role at WKU, he will also be a fully tenured professor, according to a WKU news release.

Julie Shadoan, a professor in WKU's Political Science Department, chairs the university's Faculty Senate and served on the search committee to find Stevens' replacement.

"I am excited to welcome Dr. Fischer to WKU," Shadoan wrote in an email to the Daily News. "He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in academic leadership to WKU. More importantly, he brings a commitment to the academic mission of the institution and to the support of faculty and staff who further that mission. Dr. Fisher articulated a unique understanding and respect for the shared governance process, and I believe he will be a strong partner for faculty in moving WKU forward – out of pandemic mode and beyond."

Fischer said in a statement that he views WKU as a good professional fit because it embodies student success, a long-held value he's sought to promote in his career.

"This is a special place that provides tremendous opportunities to change the lives of students and entire

communities through education, research, innovation and service,” he said. “During my interviews and visit, I learned about WKU’s strong commitment to its students and to student success. These are the same values that I have focused on throughout my career and I look forward to working with my new colleagues to build on that foundation and engage in the innovative thinking and strategic development that will help define the future of this amazing institution.

“My career speaks volumes about the transformational impact of higher education,” he said. “I’ve been privileged to mature from a first-generation college student to a professor of biology and a university administrator, and I look forward to working with the WKU community to continue providing similar, life-transforming opportunities to WKU students.”

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