

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

Campus News Archive

Campus News, Newsletters, and Events

8-22-2008

The right fit

University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news

Recommended Citation

University Relations, "The right fit" (2008). *Campus News Archive*. 1160.
https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news/1160

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Campus News, Newsletters, and Events at University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. It has been accepted for inclusion in Campus News Archive by an authorized administrator of University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. For more information, please contact skulann@morris.umn.edu.

Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

The right fit

Summary: It appears meant to be that Cheryl Contant came to the University of Minnesota, Morris. Now, after about three weeks in Morris and on campus, Contant feels it's the right fit for her.

(August 22, 2008)-It appears meant to be that Cheryl Contant (pronounced: CON'-TANT') came to the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM). Now, after about three weeks in Morris and on campus, Contant feels it's the right fit for her.

Contant began her duties recently as the new vice chancellor for academic affairs and dean at UMM.

Contant first visited the campus in April 2007 through an American Council on Education Fellowship hosted by Macalester College. Fellowship participants were encouraged to visit other campuses and when her colleague met UMM Chancellor Jacquie Johnson while visiting the University's Twin Cities campus, an invitation to Morris was inevitable.

"I was [in Morris] four hours," remembered Contant, "and 'fell in love.'" So when she later learned of the dean's position opening, she did not hesitate to respond. Contant was immediately drawn to UMM's longstanding public liberal arts mission. Additionally, the campus' history and Native American focus, the diversity of the student population and the new energy initiatives fueled her interest in UMM.

Contant completed her undergraduate work in civil engineering from the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. She holds a master's and doctoral degree in civil engineering, specializing in environmental engineering and infrastructure planning and management, both from Stanford University.

Contant feels that her experience at large public research institutions will help her make connections with the Twin Cities that will assist the Morris campus. She was a professor and director in the City and Regional Planning Program, College of Architecture at the Georgia Institute of Technology from August 1999 to just prior to coming to UMM. Prior to Georgia Tech, Contant taught at the University of Iowa for 14 years.

The vice president and president-elect of the national Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, Contant will assume the presidency in 2009. She is a past chair of the Blueprints for Successful Communities, a neighborhood-based planning initiative of the Georgia Conservancy and has chaired the Board in Control of Athletics at the University of Iowa. She is a co-author of "Scale Matters: Rethinking Planning Approaches Across Jurisdictional and Sectoral Boundaries," forthcoming in *Mega-Regions: Frontiers in Spatial Planning*, among other published work. She has presented during numerous workshops and conferences on the topics of higher education and city and regional planning.

A first generation college graduate, she was raised in an area with few liberal arts colleges. She loves to teach and to be involved in student learning. At some point, Contant hopes to return to the classroom. "I gain energy from being around students, it replenishes me and adds to my enthusiasm for my administrative work."

I have a student-centered style of teaching,” she shared. “It’s about students learning the skills to obtain knowledge over time and to think through why different groups have different value perspectives.” She hopes to participate in the UMM experience for first-year students—the First Year Seminar—and will routinely be seen, as her busy schedule permits, at performances and athletic events.

It takes a whole campus community to teach its students, believes Contant. “Students interact with staff day to day,” said Contant. “Staff model the values of the campus and are important players on campus. Many here (at UMM) are alumni they carry the loyalty and passion for this place—the energy—and they are our ambassadors for the liberal arts.”

As the new dean, her primary job is to “support the faculty and the curriculum and then to encourage everyone else to do that as well, in concert,” she said.

In her spare time, Contant looks forward to “a walk in the park with friends,” her idea of a day on the golf course. She also enjoys walking and bicycling, great food and great restaurants and is becoming aware of what Morris offers.

Contant anticipates finding her niche in Morris. “I’ll find the right things for me to do in the community. I will be an active citizen of Morris, doing what I can regarding the things I care about.”

To one extent, Contant has already found her niche. She’s living in a great Morris home, with her partner of 18 years, Karen Mumford, and their 16-year-old diabetic cat, Ricky. Mumford is an assistant professor of biology and environmental studies at UMM. (“[Ricky] runs the house and we are his staff,” she joked.) They are surrounded by friendly neighbors and “love the landscape” of this rural region. “It’s been an amazingly welcoming experience,” she said.

“I have a great staff and a great boss and mentor,” said Contant. “It’s all about fit: right person, right job, right institution.” As if the fit could get any better, Contant’s collection of PEZ containers—regular size, miniature and the occasional fuzzy variety—also fit nicely on a bookshelf in her campus office.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.