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10-19-2006

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#### Recommended Citation

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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications  
Phone: 320-589-6414, [weberm@morris.umn.edu](mailto:weberm@morris.umn.edu)

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer  
Phone: 320-589-6068, [jrray@morris.umn.edu](mailto:jrray@morris.umn.edu)

**UMM a homecoming for Chancellor Jacqueline Johnson**

*Summary: Johnson tells us more about herself, her family, her first impressions—information not found on a curriculum vitae. Through a question and answer session, you are invited to meet UMM's new chancellor, Jacqueline R. Johnson.*

(October 19, 2006)-This fall, Jacqueline R. Johnson assumed her appointment as UMM's new chancellor. The campus' fifth chief administrative officer follows Rodney A. Briggs, John Q. Imholte, David C. Johnson and Sam Schuman.

Johnson has become a familiar face on campus. She has greeted faculty and staff at the fall convocations, welcomed new students and their families to campus during orientation and met with numerous committees and individuals across campus. And the community of Morris has welcomed her warmly during a coffee and conversation hour held by the Chamber of Commerce at Common Cup coffeehouse and during the fall community picnic.

Johnson served as vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa, and vice president for academic affairs at Saint Martin's College in Lacey, Washington. She began her career at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan, where she taught sociology and served as chair of the department of anthropology and sociology, and general education program director. Her areas of teaching expertise include social psychology, gender and women's studies and social inequities. Johnson's research has explored, through art, children's perceptions of politics and investigated the social history of Polish American women.

Below, Johnson tells us more about herself, her family, her first impressions—information not found on a curriculum vitae. Through a question and answer session, you are invited to meet UMM's new chancellor, Jacqueline R. Johnson.

Chancellor Johnson, where did you grow up?

I grew up in Waukesha, Wisconsin, and attended the same grade school that my mother and her sisters had attended. I went to high school there and left when I was 17 to attend college in the Twin Cities. I still return every year to visit relatives.

Would you tell us a bit about your family?

My parents did not have the benefit of college education, so I was a "first generation" college student. I have an older brother and younger sister, both of whom still live in my hometown. I'm married. Serge has an electrical contracting business in Grand Rapids, Michigan. And, I have five wonderful, raucous adult children, ranging in age from 19 to 31. The youngest, Nadia, is a second-year student at University of Michigan. Simeon is 21 and will be a fourth-year student majoring in art (sculpture and ceramics) at Buena Vista University. Kassia is 25, married, and has just begun a graduate program in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. Chai is 27, a graduate of Marquette University in Milwaukee, and trades crude oil for a firm at the Chicago Board of Trade. Sebastien, who just turned 31, a University of Chicago graduate, does real estate investment analysis for a company that develops planned communities.

You've lived in several interesting places during your career, often near water: Storm Lake, Lake Michigan, the Pacific Ocean. How are you adjusting to life on the prairie?

I do love the water—Great Lakes are my favorites—and I think that the Pacific Northwest, where I lived for four years, is among the most beautiful regions of this country. But while living in Iowa, I developed a fondness for the dramatic changes in the land and vista that this part of the country provides—the corn fields in full growth and the endless span of earth when the corn and beans are gone. It's like living in very different worlds without ever having to travel. If you were to visit my office, you would see two watercolors, landscapes created by Iowa artist and former Buena Vista University faculty member Dennis Dykema. They capture in visual form better than I can in words the beauty of this part of the country.

What do you do in your free time?

I have always thought of the work I do as “fun” and have a hard time separating out work/play/family. I do have a dog— orphan Annie, a 105-pound monster who was abandoned by her family in Washington, so we took her in. I also have two cats, who unfortunately don't get along with each other but who both love Annie. I like to read, fiction especially, and spend time with my family when I can get them all together.

You began your career at a larger public institution, Grand Valley State University in Michigan, then served at two smaller private liberal arts institutions, Buena Vista University in Iowa and St. Martin's College in Washington. Now you are back in the public realm at the University of Minnesota, Morris. Could you briefly comment on that transition?

Actually, Grand Valley had about 3,000 students when I began as a faculty member there. It was a system of state supported cluster colleges—very innovative—and was considered a public liberal arts option in the Michigan system. Even though the institutional settings where I have served have varied, my commitment to the liberal arts and to liberal learning is unwavering.

My appointment at Morris feels very much like a “homecoming.” I am delighted to be back in a public setting, where educational mission and mandate is tied to public service and access, and to serve at an institution committed to providing an academically rigorous undergraduate experience.

Will you have an opportunity to teach here at UMM?

I hope to have a chance to teach at some point, since I think that is the best and most exciting way to meet with students—through the perspective of my discipline. And I'd really like to try teaching a web-based course. I've done lots of traditional face-to-face teaching, have taught in an interactive television framework, helped to develop online programs at Buena Vista, but haven't yet taught in that venue.

As a professor of sociology, your research and teaching areas have been described as cross-disciplinary. Would you tell us a bit about your scholarly interests? Do you have a favorite area of study?

As much as I love my discipline of sociology, I do think that the most exciting research and scholarly activity happens at the “places” where sociology intersects with other disciplines—psychology, political science, literature and art. And my research interests reflect this belief. I also have found that research emerges from my own personal interests—cultivated and developed through travel and personal relationships.

The children's art project, for example, was really the brainchild of my colleague at the Krakow Academy of Economics, Anna Karwinska. I met Anna when she came to Grand Valley on a brief faculty exchange. Our acquaintance grew to friendship and then to this project when she returned to the U.S. accompanied by her 12-year-old son to teach in my department. We both had young children at the time, and we were both interested in the way in which young people perceive and experience their own and others' political, national culture.

Would you share with us your first impressions of the campus community?

What a talented, dedicated, lively and interesting group of people live and work here! This is a thriving living and learning environment, whose participants expect a high level of engagement in shaping the community in which they live. I've had many formal and informal meetings with students, faculty and staff members during my first weeks on campus, and these encounters have reaffirmed the extremely positive impression I formed when I first came here.

What excites you about serving here at UMM?

I'm most excited about the opportunities to build on our legacy and create a future in which we expand and strengthen our role as a public, liberal arts honors college, committed to developing and using renewable energy sources, serving the region as an economic, environmental and educational resource. It's clear to me that I have joined a vibrant academic community, one sure of itself in terms of its commitments and mission, and one sure to advance to the next stages of excellence.

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](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.