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Schuman to gladly teach in retirement

Summary: At the end of the academic year, Sam Schuman, University of Minnesota, Morris chancellor, will step down as chief administrative officer and return to teaching—the essence of his academic calling.

(May 4, 2006)–“Gladly would he learn, and gladly teach” —Chaucer

At the end of the academic year, Sam Schuman, University of Minnesota, Morris chancellor, will step down as chief administrative officer and return to teaching—the essence of his academic calling. During his 11-year tenure, first as vice chancellor for academic affairs and dean and then as chancellor, creating and supporting quality, innovative educational experiences for students has been his fundamental, guiding principle. “We’ve been fortunate to benefit from Chancellor Sam’s visionary leadership,” stated University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks, “which has improved the school’s academic foundation and the student experience so significantly.”

Under Schuman’s tenure, UMM has made significant strides in several major campus initiatives including sustainable energy, study abroad, and campus expansion and improvements. UMM successfully completed its first major capital campaign and rose to the U.S. News & World Report list of top five public liberal arts colleges in the nation.

State-of-the-art teaching and research facilities

Soon after Schuman assumed chancellor responsibilities in 1998, a flurry of legislative activity resulted in several impressive projects on campus. After his predecessor, former chancellor David Johnson, spearheaded lobbying for funding for a new science building and Regional Fitness Center, it was Schuman’s task to oversee construction of the two buildings. In following years, he led the lobbying efforts for renovation of the original 1970s science facility and John Q. Imholte Hall. Since 1998, UMM has benefited from more than \$60 million for campus construction and improvements, providing state-of-the art facilities for teaching, research and fitness.

Campaign Minnesota

In his role as chancellor, Schuman was often called upon to represent UMM to potential donors and to build relationships with financial supporters. While fundraising is not an easy task, Schuman found those experiences to be energizing and pleasurable. “I have been deeply moved and tremendously impressed by the depth and strength of the bonds of affection between UMM and its supporters,” stated Schuman. “Those friends include members of our campus family, citizens of Morris and west central Minnesota, loyal alumni including those of the West Central School of Agriculture, founders of UMM in the late 1950s and many others.”

Schuman served as chief fundraising spokesperson during Campaign Minnesota, UMM’s successful first capital campaign, during which almost \$10 million was raised in private support. Thousands of students have already benefited and future students will continue to benefit from campaign gifts to the campus that support scholarships, academic programming and faculty.

International experiences

A recently established exchange program with two Chinese universities illustrates Schuman's strong advocacy for study abroad as an important element in an undergraduate experience. The inaugural course, scheduled for May 2006, allows UMM students an opportunity to study the Mandarin language and the rich history and culture of China at Capital Normal University in Beijing. The students will also stay with host families in Jiashan, the City of Morris' new sister city. Morris will soon be home to Chinese students as they are immersed in midwestern American culture and learning at UMM.

Community connections

Campus-community partnerships have been an important component in Schuman's chancellorship. In addition to the Jiashan-Morris sister city project, he has been involved with fellow Morris citizens in the All-American City program and worked with the Chamber of Commerce and other community groups. "I believe that UMM is vital to the well-being of Morris and Stevens County," remarked Schuman. "Being in Morris and Stevens County is an essential part of what makes UMM what it is. We both need each other and are stronger for our mutual support, aid and respect."

The Regional Fitness Center (RFC) is also a highlight of Schuman's UMM career. A founding board member, he's also a faithful exerciser. "It is a rare day when I am in Morris when I don't go to the RFC," stated Schuman. "I use the locker facilities, the swimming pool, the cardio/exercise room. Much more importantly, I see at the RFC a seamless blending of folks from the college and the community cooperating to improve their quality of life. Senior citizens walk the track with high school students and UMM staff. Kids come into the pool when the arthritis exercise class ends. UMM students teach aerobics to fellow students and their parents. It is a wonderful blending of people from all across our school and our region."

Schuman knows that he and wife Nancy will miss the Morris community. He reflected: "I will miss the people, the quiet and peace, the lack of pretension, a kind of quiet, unassuming midwestern openness, an unparalleled work ethic, a firm belief that education, from kindergarten to graduate school, is important and valuable. Morris has been good to Nancy and to me, and it has been essential to UMM."

Green campus initiatives

Since Earth Day 1970, UMM has been involved in green initiatives, but since 2000, campus efforts have dramatically expanded to include nearly all aspects of campus life—power, food, water, transportation, waste stream infrastructure, academic study, and quality of life. Students are involved in all of UMM's green campus initiatives, from recycling to water use reduction, from internships to service learning. A collaboration with the University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) supplies over 60 percent of UMM's electricity needs from first large-scale wind research turbine ever constructed at a U.S. public university. Plans are currently underway for a biomass gasification demonstration and research facility that will supply up to 80 percent of the campus' heating and cooling needs.

Schuman has supported and facilitated the initiatives. He is excited about UMM's future as a green campus leader. Shared Schuman, "Morris is uniquely situated for alternative energy programs. Here, and to our west, there is wind here, and to our east, there are crops. We can do both wind and biomass. Our campus and our community are poised to be national, even global, leaders in the incredibly important area of clean, renewable energy. We need to add to the wind project, complete the biomass plant and move UMM towards energy independence. Then, I am excited to hope, we can pull together our work in clean, renewable energy with our growing international focus and become a teaching laboratory and a model for the development of sustainable energy in small rural communities throughout the developing world."

Difficult times

While good memories far outweigh the not-so-good, Schuman will also leave his position as chancellor with recollections of difficult times and difficult decisions. Two time periods in UMM's past are particularly sobering: the budget cuts of 2002-2004 and the clerical union strike in 2003. "The budget cuts—over \$1.5 million, out of a budget of about \$25 million—were incredibly painful," he shared, "and we have certainly not fully recovered from that trauma. In some ways, the strike was even more painful because it forced friends and colleagues to be on opposite sides of a highly divisive issue, and, because as chancellor, I was totally without power to influence either the central administration or

the union.”

The Cougar athletics move from Division II to Division III was a difficult stage in UMM history that ended with a positive outcome. With UMM established in the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference and the “win” tally growing steadily, Schuman reflected: “I think this has been a wonderful transition. It was amazingly hard to bring about. I would say it took by far the largest part of my time for about a year, but now that it has happened, almost everyone agrees it was a great move. Now, we play schools of our size and our budgetary status, we are competitive in every sport, and our student athletes and their fans are enthusiastic and optimistic.”

The campus community

In addition to being loyal Cougar fans, the Schumans are active participants in campus life, from theatre to music, from convocations to faculty seminars. “I know we will miss the events, running the entire range from Maya Angelou and Garrison Keillor to the Sunday afternoon student music recitals or the Tuesday afternoon women’s softball games,” reflected Schuman, “but I suspect that, more than events, I’ll miss the students, staff and faculty at UMM, and the feeling of being a part of the daily working to strengthen a valuable institution.”

Throughout his UMM career, Schuman has frequently and vocally commended the people who together create the campus community. “Our staff are deeply committed to the college, prideful in the work they do, whether it is management or maintenance, and hard-working. They are an indispensable source of institutional strength. UMM faculty are splendid classroom teachers, first. They are consistently praised by current students and alumni. UMM faculty are also serious and productive scholars.”

UMM students have left their mark in Schuman’s memory and in his heart. “I have said before, and am delighted to repeat, that UMM students are, to me, the best I have encountered, including my days as a student, and later as a teacher and as an administrator. There are many splendid things about UMM and it’s people, but for me, the single best thing about our college is our students. They are bright, hard working, open, responsible, dizzyingly engaging. I love ’em.”

From Minnesota to New Mexico

This summer, the Schumans will move from Morris to Albuquerque for one year, where Schuman will serve as the University of New Mexico’s Garrey Carruthers Chair in Honors Visiting Distinguished Professor in the University Honors Program. The author of several books, Schuman plans to write more as he returns to a faculty role. He is excited about getting back into the classroom. “I have taught a class just about every year since I became an administrator in 1976,” shared Schuman. “It will be different being a full-fledged member of the faculty again after all these years. I am both looking forward to the work and surprisingly nervous about it. Although I have tried to keep a presence in the classroom, my teaching skills are, I know, rusty. I hope I can get them polished up a bit.”

Schuman shared that he’s looking forward to new challenges, new opportunities, and new surroundings, but he will miss the prairie. He will miss UMM. “I know I will miss the daily stimulation of doing important and challenging work the artistic and intellectual stimulation of a fine small college campus and the ever-energizing presence of UMM’s bright, questioning, developing young women and men.”

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.