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UMN Morris Chancellor Michelle Behr Announces Retirement

Chancellor Behr has led the Morris campus through a strategic visioning and planning process, reaffirmation of accreditation, and record-breaking years of private giving.

MORRIS, Minnesota (March 2, 2021)— University of Minnesota Morris Chancellor Michelle Behr plans to retire as chancellor at the end of the academic year. During her tenure, Chancellor Behr has led the Morris campus through a strategic visioning and planning process, reaffirmation of accreditation, and record-breaking years of private giving.

“There is seldom a perfect time for leadership transitions, but I am taking this step, confident that this is the right decision for the University of Minnesota Morris and for me,” says Chancellor Behr. “UMN Morris is, as I said when I arrived, ‘...a singular, fabulous place.’ I have every confidence that you all will rise to the challenges of this extraordinary place.”

Under Chancellor Behr’s leadership, UMN Morris completed a strategic enrollment management plan that reimagines and elevates purposeful coordination of student recruitment and retention across campus. Chancellor Behr also helped the campus to realize successful reaffirmation of accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, significant growth in the endowment and several record years of private giving, the creation of the Student Assistance Grant for Emergencies (SAGE) fund, and the launch of the search for the founding director of the Morris Challenge.

“Chancellor Behr has proven to be a strong advocate for the Morris campus community, and her contributions will be felt for years to come,” says President Gabel. “I am so grateful for her leadership and service to UMN Morris and the UMN System as a whole, and I hope you join me in showing her our appreciation during her remaining months on campus.”

Chancellor Behr became UMN Morris’s sixth chancellor in February 2017. She came to UMN Morris from Birmingham-Southern College in Birmingham, Alabama, where she served as provost, senior vice president for academic affairs, and dean of the college. Prior to her arrival at BSC, Chancellor Behr served variously as a faculty member, department chair, university assessment coordinator, and college dean at several public institutions of higher education. She earned a baccalaureate degree in anthropology with honors from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and her master’s and doctoral degrees from Arizona State University in anthropology and geography, respectively. Chancellor Behr is a three-time Fulbright Scholar and was selected as an American Council on Education Fellow in 2005–06.

Chancellor Behr will conclude her tenure on June 25, 2021. President Gabel has named Dean Janet Schrunk Ericksen as acting chancellor, with support from UMN System partners.

Chancellor Behr made her announcement on Tuesday, March 2, at Campus Assembly after informing University of Minnesota President Joan Gabel of her decision earlier this semester.