



News Release

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Smith Chosen to Lead Northern State University

ABERDEEN, S.D. – James M. Smith, vice president for economic development at Bowling Green State University, will become the 16th president of Northern State University, the South Dakota Board of Regents announced Wednesday.

Smith replaces Patrick Schloss, who resigned earlier this year when he was hired as president of Valdosta State University in Georgia. Smith will begin his duties on the Aberdeen campus July 1. Since this fall, Laurie Stenberg Nichols has served as interim president at NSU.

“Our search committee was very interested in Dr. Smith’s recent work at Bowling Green to forge relationships between public higher education and economic development, and his successful record in leading university communities through strategic planning and maintaining academic excellence,” said Regent Kathryn Johnson, chair of the search committee.

As vice president for economic development at the Ohio campus, Smith was charged with developing internal and external relationships to benefit Bowling Green State University, the region, and the state with overall economic enhancement. Prior to his current appointment in July 2006, Smith served as dean of BGSU Firelands, the only regional campus of Bowling Green State University.

“I am truly delighted to be selected for this position. The people in Aberdeen and at Northern have been wonderfully positive about the future of this institution,” Smith said. “The regents, likewise, impressed me with the level of respect and support that they share for the university. I see an exceptionally bright future for Northern State University and am extremely excited to begin working with faculty, staff, students, and the community to shape that future.

“I would like to thank the members of the search committee for their support,” Smith continued, “and I thank the regents for their belief in my leadership style and direction as we move forward with the next phase of excellence for Northern State.”

Smith is a veteran organizational leader, with experience leading educational institutions at both the K-12 and postsecondary levels. During his tenure at BGSU Firelands, overall enrollment increased by more than 30 percent. Prior to joining the senior administrative team at BGSU,

Smith was dean of the School of Education at Indiana University South Bend, where he led the largest degree-granting unit on campus.

The new incoming president also served in administrative capacities at West Texas A&M University and Butler University. Prior to his university service, Smith was a public school administrator in central and southwest Ohio. His research and teaching interests focus primarily on school reform, school reorganization, and the impacts of high-stakes testing on at-risk youth. An author of many publications, Smith continues to lecture and publish scholarly findings targeted at overall school improvement and school reform.

Smith has a Ph.D. in educational leadership from Miami University of Ohio, where he also earned a B.S. degree in elementary education. His master of education degree is from Xavier University.

Smith is married to Connie Ruhl-Smith, an academic as well. Dr. Ruhl-Smith, a teacher, author, and administrator, is known for her work in student retention and student academic support. The two enjoy traveling, entertaining, and collaboratively supporting university-based student activities and events, ranging from the performing arts to athletics.

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Dr. James M. Smith