



News Release

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Sheila Gestring Named to Lead University of South Dakota as President

VERMILLION, S.D. – Sheila Gestring, vice president of finance and chief financial officer at the University of South Dakota, will lead that institution forward as USD’s 18th president, the South Dakota Board of Regents announced Tuesday.

Gestring, a South Dakota native who holds a master of business administration degree from USD, becomes president at the Vermillion campus June 22, 2018. She succeeds James W. Abbott, who is retiring after 21 years at the USD helm, the second longest-serving president in the university’s history.

Regents’ officials said Gestring’s experience guiding the overall financial health of the university, as well as her work with the USD Foundation to set major fund-raising goals and priorities, demonstrated her qualifications for the job.

“Her track record at USD speaks for itself,” said Regent Kevin Schieffer, who chaired the presidential search committee. “She has excelled at every challenge given to her over the years. She knows this university and its needs very well. She has clear goals for bringing USD to even greater prominence, and she is ready to lead us there. President-elect Gestring brings home-grown brilliance, her legendary South Dakota work ethic, and proven executive abilities to one of the most important jobs in our state. We are excited to work closely with her in her new role as president.”

As chief financial officer since 2010 and on the USD finance staff since 2006, Gestring has stabilized the university’s financial position and developed innovative financing plans for new facilities. Serving on the President’s Executive Cabinet involved her in major academic and student topics, institutional problem solving, and long-term strategic planning. As the university’s liaison to the USD Foundation, she was closely engaged with the foundation in its “Onward-the Campaign for South Dakota” fund-raising campaign that surpassed a goal of \$250 million several months early and may reach \$300 million by its conclusion.

Prior to coming to USD, Gestring was chief financial officer at Flathead Valley Community College in Montana from 2003 to 2006. Before that, she worked in increasingly responsible positions for South Dakota state government, including duties in internal audit, budget and

Sheila Gestring – 2

finance, and management analysis at the Board of Regents and the departments of Human Services, Transportation, and Health. In addition to her M.B.A. from USD, Gestring holds a bachelor's degree in accounting and business administration from the University of Sioux Falls.

“I am honored and humbled to be given the opportunity to lead the incredible talent at the University of South Dakota as its 18th president,” Gestring said. “I inherit a fabulous platform on which to begin working as USD's next president. President Abbott's 21-year legacy has created a strong foundation. I pledge to honor President Abbott's legacy by sustaining and building upon that foundation.”

Gestring's spouse, Keith, holds a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering from the School of Mines and Engineering – Montana Tech of the University of Montana and is a long-term employee with the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources. They have two children, Dillon, 15, and Wyatt, 13, who are avid Coyote fans and very involved in school activities.

In addition to family, Gestring is actively engaged in the Vermillion community, including service on community boards. She is current chair of the Vermillion Chamber and Development Corp., a member of the Integrated Community Action Plan committee, a founding volunteer on the Vermillion Area Sports Authority, and she attends multiple Vermillion School District activities.

Founded in 1862 and the first university in the Dakotas, the University of South Dakota is the only public liberal arts university in the state, with 205 undergraduate and 73 graduate programs in the College of Arts & Sciences, School of Education, School of Law, Sanford School of Medicine, School of Health Sciences, Beacom School of Business, and College of Fine Arts. With an enrollment of nearly 10,000 students and more than 400 faculty, USD has a 17:1 student/faculty ratio, and it ranks among the best in academics and affordability. USD's 17 athletic programs compete at the NCAA Division I level.

The university is governed as part of a system of public higher education by the South Dakota Board of Regents, which is composed of eight members appointed by the governor for six-year terms and one student regent appointed for a limited term.