



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, July 27, 2018

Arkansas Education Leader Named Board of Regents' Chief Executive

PIERRE, S.D. – The chancellor of the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith was appointed Friday to lead South Dakota's six public universities and two special schools. Paul B. Beran will become the South Dakota Board of Regents' executive director and chief executive officer on or before Sept. 4.

Beran's career in higher education includes service in five states, first as a faculty member and administrator, and for the last 17 years as a university CEO in Arkansas and Oklahoma public university systems. Prior to joining the University of Arkansas System in 2006, Beran was president of Northwestern Oklahoma State University, with campuses in Alva, Enid, and Woodward, Okla.

"Our board was impressed with Dr. Beran's track record of accomplishment," said Regents President Kevin Schieffer, "and has a lot more for him to do here. The board has already outlined some of our key expectations to Dr. Beran, which we will be working to refine and finalize at our August meeting. We have a full agenda for Paul in advancing South Dakota higher education initiatives and building on the strong foundation in place today."

Some specific Board priorities cited by Schieffer include:

- Outreach to all higher education partners—including technical institutions, K-12, private universities, tribal colleges, and training centers, as well as political leaders and private industry—to develop an actionable plan for improving South Dakota's workforce needs;
- Aggressively pursuing system efficiencies to combat shrinking revenue sources and keep tuition costs down;
- Improving system facilities' planning through building utilization and maintenance and repair practices;
- Strengthening outreach efforts with the administration and legislature;
- Devising an achievable plan to improve needs-based scholarship opportunities for South Dakota students; and
- Improving progress on specific goals laid out in the Board of Regents' strategic plan.

“These are a few of the priorities the board will work with Dr. Beran, staff, and our university presidents to refine and develop, along with other objectives, into a system-wide action plan,” Schieffer said.

“My wife, Janice, and I look forward to becoming new residents of Pierre and having the opportunity to explore the beauty and history of South Dakota. In particular, I am very pleased to be working for the forward-thinking members of the South Dakota Board of Regents,” Beran said.

“South Dakota has strong institutions and excellent leadership in those institutions. I anticipate great experiences and success working with all the universities and the special schools to connect higher education in the best way possible to career and workforce opportunities for the students in South Dakota,” he said. “Working with the business community as a partner in defining how best to connect education and careers will be an important part of our work as a system. Looking for and acting on system efficiencies will help keep tuition affordable for traditional students as well as those non-traditional students who seek to advance their lives and help their families.

“As all the regental universities work together to increase the number of college graduates, we are helping each graduate to create a positive life trajectory that will continue into many future generations,” Beran said.

Prior to his time in Arkansas and Oklahoma, Beran served as a senior administrator at community colleges in Massachusetts and Missouri. At the beginning of his career, he was a faculty member at the university and community college level in Texas. He is also active professionally, with current service on the Arkansas Career Education and Workforce Development Board, representing the Arkansas university presidents and chancellors, and on the state Chamber of Commerce’s board of directors.

He holds a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction in higher education from Texas A&M University and has completed post-graduate work at the University of Houston. He also has a master of arts degree in English and bachelor degrees in English and political science, all from Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas.

Paul and Janice Beran currently reside in Fort Smith, Ark. They have two sons, two daughters-in-law, and three grandchildren.

Beran succeeds Michael G. Rush, who left the South Dakota public higher education system in May after three years of service as its executive director and CEO.