

WAKE WELCOMES WENTE

Dr. Susan R. Wente named as Wake Forest's 14th president

Emily Tracy | February 7, 2021

Change. One of those dubious words that can both inspire us with hope and freeze us with fear. But out of change can come a new perspective, a new prospect or — in the case of our university — a new president.

At the culmination of a lengthy and involved search process, the University Search Committee and Board of Trustees recently appointed Dr. Susan R. Wente to be Wake Forest's 14th president.

Wente is coming to Wake Forest from Vanderbilt University, where she currently serves as the provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs. She is to succeed current Wake Forest President Nathan O. Hatch, who has served since 2005.

Wente will be the first female president in the 187-year history of Wake Forest University, bringing her unique set of experiences, values and visions to guide our school in the years to come.

“From the start, my parents instilled in me the importance of service, a strong work ethic and the power of education,” Wente stated in her opening message to the Wake Forest community. “I look forward to building on the strong foundation that exists and writing the next chapter of the University's story with you.”

Wente holds a doctorate in biochemistry from the University of California, Berkeley and is highly respected for her contributions to biomedical research. She has received numerous awards, including the National Institutes of Health MERIT Award (2010-2020) and the Nashville Business Journal's 2020 Women of Influence Award.

Serving at Vanderbilt for the past seven years, Wente has continued to emphasize research, community engagement and excellence in educational leadership. She explained that

“trust, transparency and teamwork” are the three foundational values that guide her work.

Melissa Shields Jenkins, a member of the Search Committee and associate professor of English at Wake Forest, elaborated on Wenté’s leadership. “Dr. Wenté is committed to connecting with people, hearing their ideas and building a shared vision. She invites all perspectives into the conversation.”

In addition to faculty, students expressed their anticipation for the future of Wake Forest under Wenté, including current senior and Rhodes scholar Savarni Sanka. “When she (Wenté) walks into a room, she brings with her this sense of togetherness, resolve, and trust,” Sanka said. “I could not be happier to welcome her to the Wake Forest family as our next president.”

After consultations with more than 1,600 Wake Forest community members and discussions with numerous qualified individuals, Wenté emerged as an ideal candidate. She shares Wake Forest’s values and visions moving forward, notably the desire to maintain academic rigor and excellence and embrace difficulties associated with inspiring change.

Wenté will assume the presidency on July 1, 2021. Until then, she has left us with some thoughts to ponder: “For universities and for society, it is a time of change. It is a time of challenge. It is a time of opportunity for those committed to mission and to values.

“It is a time for Wake Forest to shine its light even brighter.”

Information & research included in this news story is primarily from the [Wake Forest University website](#).