

Stephens selected to join University as provost, vice president for Academic Affairs

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W. Richard Stephens Jr., who is currently provost at Catawba College in Salisbury, NC, will join the administrative team at Alfred University as provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, effective July 1.

Stephens will succeed William F. Hall, who is retiring after 33 years at Alfred University, where he has been provost and academic vice president for the past three years.

“We appreciate Bill Hall’s service to Alfred University and we will miss him, personally and professionally, but we are pleased to be able to fill this critical role with Rick Stephens, a seasoned chief academic officer,” said President Charles M. Edmondson.

Stephens says he accepted the offer to join Alfred University’s administration because “Alfred is an excellent small university, well-poised for this time in higher education when nimbleness is required.”

Throughout the interview process, Stephens said he was impressed with the interest, enthusiasm and excitement he found among the faculty, staff and students at Alfred University.

“Every school has certain aspirations and opportunities,” said Stephens, “but not every school has the human capital to take advantage of them the way that Alfred does. I was just really impressed by the people.”

He and his wife Debbie agreed “Alfred is not just a university, but a community.”

As a sociologist, Stephens said he’s accustomed to listening to people, to learning their stories, and that’s what his Day 1 agenda will be at AU.

Stephens has a track record at several other institutions, and at each “I have been able to help the institution figure out how to deliver its mission.” Alfred, he believes, understands its mission, and he can “help people give some real focus to that. That’s something I am eager to do.”

Stephens joined Catawba as provost in January of 2009. Among his accomplishments was the strategic hiring of 25 percent of the faculty. As positions became available, Stephens said he weighed how each should be filled to best advance the college’s mission.

He created a Winter Term session, and expanded summer school offerings; led the review, revision and implementation of the general education curriculum for the liberal arts college with just over 1,300 undergraduate students.

Stephens led the redevelopment of the School of Evening and Graduate Studies to include two off-site programs one at Davidson County Community College and one at Central Piedmont Community College. The program at CPCC is a partnership with N.C.’s largest institution of higher education, with 75,000 students focused on business and early childhood education. The CPCC program was recently evaluated with highest of commendations by a visiting team

from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges.

He encouraged a focus on instructional technology and classroom pedagogy, employing both external consultants, as well as peer-to-peer faculty development.

In partnership with faculty, development colleagues, and friends of the college, gifts and grants in excess of \$4 million were raised for use in academic program development in environmental science/sustainability and business, first generation student programming, classroom technology upgrades, internships, student and faculty international travel, a summer environmental summit for high school students, and a major National Science Foundation program for STEM education.

Stephens was involved in developing new programming for recording arts in music, graduate degrees in education, business, and athletic training, undergraduate health science such as nursing, and further facilities upgrades in theater and classroom space.

Stephens has also led Catawba's SACS accreditation efforts through fifth year interim reports, substantive change reports, focused visits, and the run-up to the college's decennial reaffirmation. Over the past three years, he has also served on two on-site and six off-site SACS review teams.

A native of the southern Illinois area, Stephens earned his undergraduate degree in sociology from Greenville College, graduating magna cum laude. He earned two graduate degrees from the University of Kansas, one in sociology and the other in philosophy.

He was awarded a Pew Grant in the 1980s to study socialist reform in the Soviet Union and economic reform in China. While in the Soviet Union, he was also assigned to conduct baseball clinics as a roving instructor by the International Baseball Association.

Stephens has served as an assistant professor, associate professor, professor and chair of the department of sociology and social work at Greenville College in Greenville, IL; as a visiting professor of sociology at Nizhni Novgorod State University in Nizhni Novgorod, Russia; as vice president for academic affairs and as academic dean at Eastern Nazarene College in Quincy, MA.; and as chief academic officer and dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies at Husson University in Bangor, ME.

Rick and Debbie Stephens have two adult children and one grandchild.