University Appoints New Provost

Jean Morrison comes from University of Southern California

Jean Morrison, former executive vice provost for academic affairs and graduate programs at the University of Southern California, is the University’s new provost and chief academic officer. Morrison, also a professor of earth sciences, had been a faculty member at USC since 1988 and had directed the USC Women in Science and Engineering program for the past eight years.

“I am very excited to bring Jean Morrison to Boston University in this key academic leadership role,” says President Robert A. Brown. “She has the academic experience, skills, and vision to help the University continue on the path of increasing quality and impact.”

Morrison, who started her new job in January, succeeds Provost David Campbell, who returned to teaching and to the research projects he set aside more than five years ago when he assumed the position of BU’s chief academic officer.

“I’m incredibly excited about the opportunity at Boston University,” says Morrison. “Large research universities have a kind of energy that’s unique, and BU’s a big place. That makes for some unique and creative possibilities. It’s one of the nation’s upcoming research universities, and it has outstanding faculty, which is the heart of a research university.”

Morrison believes that the many similarities between the two institutions will serve her well. “Both USC and BU are large, urban research universities that serve large undergraduate populations, but also have a significant cohort of graduate students,” she says. “They’re both characterized by a college of arts and sciences and an array of professional schools. Having had experience with the full breadth of disciplines and size and shape and form should be very helpful.”

The job of a provost, she says, has two critical components. “The first is to support the president and work within the university to implement the president’s vision,” she says. “The other is to support the academic deans. They are the experts. A good provost allows the deans to be as successful as they can be.”

At USC, Morrison guided the office of undergraduate programs, the USC Graduate School, and the office of continuing education and summer programs.

Morrison is a metamorphic petrologist, whose research explores the evolution of the Earth’s crust. As a doctoral candidate, she conducted research in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. “I’m a stable isotope geochemist,” she says. “What we do is measure the stable isotopic composition in rocks and minerals. That tells us a great deal about their origin.”

She has served on several National Science Foundation panels and as an editor of the Journal of Metamorphic Geology. In 2000, she was named Sigma Chi Professor of the Year, and she received Sigma Gamma Epsilon’s Excellence in Teaching Award. She earned a BA from Colgate University in 1980, an MS from the University of Georgia in 1983, and a PhD from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1988.

Although she was born and raised in Pauling, N.Y., Morrison says her two children are “Californian through and through,” and face climate shock in the move to Boston.

“My 15-year-old daughter is concerned that she may freeze to death,” she says. “But I think we can buy warm clothes.” AJ

Jean Morrison talks about her new role as provost in a video at bu.edu/bostonia.

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