

Introducing the New Dean of Arts & Sciences

Ann Cudd comes from post as University of Kansas vice provost

THE NEW DEAN OF THE COLLEGE and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences is an academic's academic. Ann Cudd jokes that she and her economist husband discuss the insights of economics so often that their three children "speak in terms of opportunity cost and marginal benefit."

Cudd, who became the Arts & Sciences leader August 1, replaces Virginia Sapiro, who stepped down after eight years and is taking a year's sabbatical before returning to teach in the CAS political science department.

"Ann brings us a wealth of experience as a faculty member and an academic leader at a major research university dedicated to quality undergraduate education," says President Robert A. Brown.

Previously the vice provost of the University of Kansas, Cudd is a philosopher who researches oppression by probing disciplines from economics to psychology. She says her first order

of business is "a lot of listening and talk to a lot of people, to find out what are the passions of the current faculty, how can they see their disciplines growing, and their interdisciplinary projects in research going forward."

And she's eager to promote BU's initiatives in expanding its big data faculty and abilities, developing a new, University-wide general education curriculum, and physically redesigning classrooms for more interactive instruction. "You can't have chairs that are stuck to the floor," she says.

One thing is certain: Cudd disagrees with those who say the country should downplay the liberal arts



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in favor of professionally oriented fields (business, science, technology, engineering, and math) that may offer more and better-paying jobs. A broad liberal arts and sciences education prepares students who are likely to change jobs several times over their careers, she says, and there is plenty of research showing that the pay gap between the professionally oriented majors and other majors closes by middle age.

"The humanities are especially good at teaching us how to look at society differently, look at questions differently, ask the ethical questions," she says. "It doesn't make sense to me to study the sciences in isolation from the humanities and the social sciences." All those fields ultimately seek a better understanding of the world in order to make it better, and the questions they attempt to answer are not just scientific, but "social science questions, interpretive questions, and also humanistic."

Cudd practices what she preaches in her own academic research, which helped pioneer "analytical feminism,"

a field that seeks to quantify the oppression of women (and others) in economic and political terms, she says, rather than discuss solely "what does it feel like to be oppressed." She has written numerous papers, including one arguing that capitalism is good for women—an insight she says can be countercultural in the liberal environment of academia.

"Capitalism frees women from the bonds of tradition and also helps women to find a way to get lots of opportunities in capitalist enterprise," she says. "If you're a good trading partner with me, then I'll trade with you, and it doesn't matter what the color of your skin is or what your gender is. I do disagree with the socialist feminists who argue that capitalism inevitably is a kind of oppressive system for all people. I think, actually, it has progressive ends."

Cudd earned a bachelor's degree from Swarthmore in 1982 and a PhD in philosophy from the University of Pittsburgh. She was at the University of Kansas for 25 years, as a teacher and an administrator. **RB**

WEB EXTRA
Watch a video of Ann Cudd, new dean of Arts & Sciences, discussing academia and her hopes for BU at bu.edu/bostonia.