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June 11, 2019 - From the President's Desk

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June 11, 2019 - From the President's Desk

Dear Colleagues,

Rebecca Cole, vice president of advancement and president of the Wright State University Foundation, will retire after a highly successful career on July 1.

I have asked Bill Bigham, director of planned giving, to serve as interim vice president of advancement while the university conducts a national search.

Ms. Cole joined Wright State in 2009 as associate vice president for development and in 2011 was named vice president for advancement and president of the university foundation. Over the last decade, she has played a vital role in supporting scholarships and student success, attracting and retaining world-class faculty, building state-of-the-art facilities, and providing hands-on research and experiential learning opportunities for students.

During a career that spanned four decades, she raised vital funds to support five major universities, including Michigan State University, Arizona State University, Oregon State University, University of Arizona, and Wright State University. During that time, she either led or was part of a team that completed six comprehensive campaigns, totaling nearly \$2.5 billion in funds raised. She has told me that the greatest contribution of her career has been helping donors to realize their dreams of making higher education accessible to literally thousands of students.

At Wright State, Ms. Cole oversaw the university's largest fundraising campaign, Rise. Shine. The Campaign for Wright State University, which raised more than \$167.7 million from more than 31,300 donors, including 17,659 first-time donors to Wright State. She also played an important role in bringing Tom Hanks to our campus for the dedication of the Tom Hanks Center for Motion Pictures. In 2017, the university launched Discover Your Story: The Campaign for the Wright State University Archives Center, which will provide a new home for the university's world-renowned Special Collections and Archives. This year, the Wright State Foundation created the Students First Fund, a new initiative that proactively seeks and funds innovative ideas that enhance the Wright State student experience.

Mr. Bigham has more than 20 years of successful fundraising experience at both private and public universities. He joined Wright State in 2014 as director of development in the College of Nursing and Health. Since 2017, he has served as the university's director of planned giving.

Prior to joining Wright State, he was vice president for advancement at Cedarville University. At Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, New York, he served as vice president for advancement, director of development, director of external relations, and director of institutional relations.

Mr. Bigham earned a Master of Public Administration and a certificate in nonprofit management from the College of Brockport, State University of New York, and a bachelor's degree in history from Roberts Wesleyan College.

Please join me in congratulating Becky on an outstanding career and thanking her for her critical contributions to Wright State, and welcoming Bill to his new role.

Warmest regards,
Cheryl B. Schrader, Ph.D.
President

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