



Magazine

Linda Bennett
USI's third president





President Linda L. M. Bennett

Leading USI



Board of Trustees chair John Dunn announced Dr. Linda L. M. Bennett as the third president of the University of Southern Indiana in January 2009.

Amid hearty applause, Bennett responded to the introduction and said, "Being elected to serve an institution as dynamic and of the caliber of the University of Southern Indiana is a singular honor, and it is without question a high point of my career."

Bennett has been at USI since 2003, serving as provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. She also is professor of political science and has more than 25 years of teaching experience.

Dunn said, "We look forward to informed and innovative leadership from Dr. Bennett." He chaired the presidential search and screen committee.

Bennett brings a substantial track record to the position. In addition to her teaching career, she has served in higher education administration for more than 11 years.

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Dr. Linda Bennett meets with students during the annual spring Breakfast with the President.



Dr. Linda Bennett and her husband Dr. Stephen Bennett.

Community engagement

Last fall the University of Southern Indiana was one of 119 public and private colleges and universities nationwide to receive an institution of community engagement classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, an entity that encourages, upholds, and dignifies the profession of the teacher and the cause of higher education. USI was recognized for curricular engagement and outreach and partnerships. Leadership for the application came from Bennett.

Bennett explained what the classification means for USI. She said, “This is national recognition of the outstanding work of USI faculty, staff, and students in connecting the learning environment on campus with southwestern Indiana. It affirms that USI takes seriously its mission to support education, social, and economic growth, and civic and cultural awareness in southwestern Indiana.

“The importance of this recognition will be evident as the University seeks grant funding, recruits new faculty and staff, and continues to build on its strong reputation for accountability in public higher education,” she said.

Plans to listen

In response to questions from student leaders, during an April breakfast question-and-answer session, Bennett said her plan is to listen in the next year as she meets with students, faculty, and other USI constituencies.

She said, “I’ve been provost for six years, but I need to listen again because times are different, and I’m coming from a different vantage point. I want to know the state of the USI campus.”

She assured students the USI reputation is growing. “University of Southern Indiana is recognized as a quality institution,” she said. “USI is a young university. When external committees come on campus and teams of people come to evaluate our programs from other universities, they tell me,

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Linda L. M. Bennett

At a Glance



She was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio.

She earned undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees from the University of Cincinnati.

Her husband is Dr. Stephen E. Bennett, an educator and author. She has two adult stepchildren, Sherri Creighton and Robert Bennett, and two stepgrandchildren. Sherri, her husband Jeff, and their two daughters, Chelsea and Abby, live in Cincinnati. Robert and his partner Brett Warner live in Columbus, Ohio.

Her mother Josephine Mayfield lives in Cincinnati. Her father Wayne Mayfield is deceased, and her brother Jerry Mayfield lives in Methuen, Massachusetts.

While provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at USI, she led initiatives focused on

- enrollment and retention management
- outreach and engagement
- faculty development
- retention of intellectual capital
- accreditation renewal
- long-range planning

In 1999 at Appalachian State University, she became dean of the College of Arts and Science. The college had 16 departments, the Center for Appalachian Studies, and the Appalachian Cultural Museum with a \$21 million budget.

She served as chair of the Department of Political Science at Northern Kentucky University for three years prior to moving to Appalachian State University.

Bennett began her career as visiting assistant professor at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, in 1983. Over a 13-year period, she rose to full professor and chair of the Political Science Department.

She has presented conference papers on topics in political science at national and international conferences.

She has published articles in periodicals including *Academic Leader*, *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, *Political Research Quarterly*, and others.

Locally, she chairs the Board of Directors' Development Committee for Southwest Indiana Network for Education.

Bennett is on the Board of Directors for Holly's House, an organization that provides services to victims of abuse.

She is a member of the Southwest Indiana Regional Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.



Dr. Linda Bennett extends a handshake to one of the graduates of the class of 2009.



Former USI presidents Dr. David L. Rice, left, and Dr. H. Ray Hoops, meet with Dr. Linda Bennett.

‘You’ve got it right. You are doing a great job.’” One visiting accreditation team member said, “I wish I was here.”

New campus facilities

The Business and Engineering Center and expansion of the University Center will be opening over the next two years. Both will provide ample opportunities for students to learn and lead.

Bennett said the renovations planned for the University Center will be a wonderful starting point for sparking renewed interest in student organizations. “When students see the UC expansion, they will want to be included in the hub of activity there.”

Warm embrace from the region

“We want to keep alive why the University of Southern Indiana was founded and the core values of that time,” Bennett said. “We want to reaffirm the core values, and add other core values to the mix. The focus of my administration will be on the future and looking ahead will be a goal.

“USI is warmly received by the surrounding region and that is a tremendous advantage. Evidence of our strong institutional ties to the region is in multiple partnerships.

“I plan to be visible on campus. I have taught classes in recent years in order to stay connected to students. In recent weeks, some of those students have stopped to say hello.”

Bennett said, “USI has hard-working students. I see students who care about each other. That sense of community is as important as the brick and mortar.”

Commencement marks important celebration

As president designate, Bennett presided at the 2009 USI Commencement in May. Prior to the

ceremony Bennett commented about how much she likes the tradition of Commencement. "It is a significant convocation where graduates, faculty, alumni, and distinguished friends gather in celebration to honor the graduates and the purpose of USI," she said.

"USI alumni are making a difference, every day, in their careers and in their communities."

In opening comments during the ceremony, she said, "We are grateful for the gathering of this remarkable group of friends and family and the opportunity to mark the achievements of our graduates and to welcome them to the honorable community of educated men and women. Today's class, when combined with the alumni of record, increases the number of alumni to over 27,500. The impact of our graduates on the region, throughout the state, and across the country is significant. USI alumni are making a difference, every day, in their careers and in their communities."

Bennett took office July 1 and will be installed as the third USI president in October.

She follows Dr. H. Ray Hoops, who served as president from 1994 to 2009, and Dr. David L. Rice, who served as president for 27 years from 1967 to 1994.

For more on Dr. Bennett, visit www.usi.edu/president.

Fall to be wrapped with inaugural events

The installation of Dr. Linda L. M. Bennett as USI's third president will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursday, October 15, 2009, in the Physical Activities Center (PAC). Inauguration events are scheduled throughout the week.

■ Parents and Family Weekend

Saturday, October 10, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

President Bennett will welcome USI students and parents during a picnic lunch on the quad. (In event of rain, Physical Activities Center)

Hosted by USI Parents and Families Association

■ Alumni Reception

Sunday, October 11, 2 to 4 p.m.

President Bennett will greet alumni during a reception in the McCutchan Art Center/Pace Galleries in the Liberal Arts Center.

Art by alumni artists will be on exhibit.

Hosted by USI Alumni Association

■ New Harmony Reception

Tuesday, October 13, 5 to 7 p.m.

President Bennett will meet with donors, patrons, and New Harmony friends at the Atheneum in New Harmony, Indiana.

Hosted by Friends of Historic New Harmony

■ Inauguration Symposium

Wednesday, October 14, 3 p.m.

Carter Hall, University Center

Hosted by Faculty Senate

■ Inauguration Day

Thursday, October 15, Noon

Delegates' Lunch, Carter Hall, University Center

Hosted by USI Board of Trustees

Inauguration, 3 p.m.

Physical Activities Center

Reception immediately following in Carter Hall, University Center

■ President's Associates Dinner

Friday, October 16, 6:30 p.m.

President Bennett will greet major donors.

Carter Hall, University Center

Hosted by USI Foundation