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WKU provost announces retirement

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Jan 21, 2021



Cheryl Stevens

The search for Western Kentucky University's next chief academic officer is picking up, with the first of four finalists for the position expected to visit campus next week and Acting Provost Cheryl Stevens announcing her retirement.

“As you know, the past year has been remarkably challenging, each of us dealing with the burdens and difficulties created by COVID-19 and a global pandemic. On top of the professional hurdles, like many of you, I also have dealt with significant personal challenges,” Stevens wrote in a campuswide message Tuesday.

“After much thought and careful consideration, I have determined that I want to explore the new opportunities that the flexibility of retirement might offer to me personally and to the WKU and Bowling Green communities. While I

have enjoyed my work at WKU, I do not feel comfortable making a commitment to you and the university to continue in an administrative role for another four years,” Stevens wrote.

WKU spokesman Bob Skipper said Stevens is stepping down as provost effective June 30, and she will officially retire from the university Dec. 30.

In an internal campus email, the provost search group’s co-chairs wrote that four finalists for the position would visit campus over the next two weeks. Those visits include a series of open forums, committee co-chairs College of Health and Human Services Dean Tania Basta and Executive Vice President Susan Howarth wrote in the memo.



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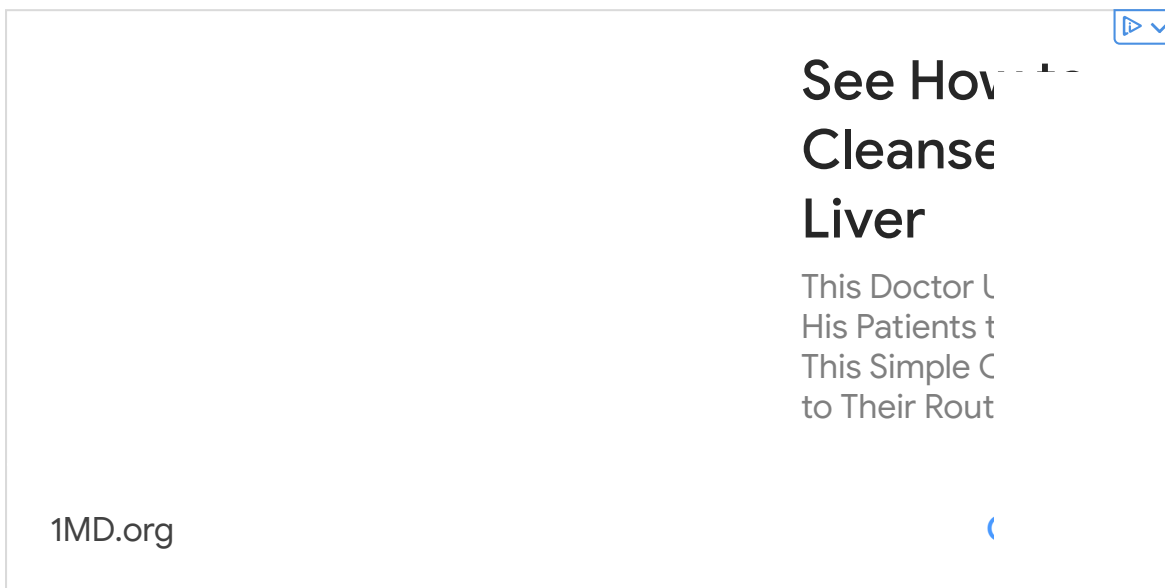
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The first provost finalist will visit campus Sunday and Monday, and an open forum will be at 2 p.m. Monday in the Downing Student Union auditorium. On Wednesday, the university named that candidate as Susan Mumm, previously the principal at Brescia University in London, Ontario.

A second candidate will visit campus Jan. 27-28, with another forum scheduled for 2 p.m. Jan. 28 in the Downing Student Union auditorium.

The remaining two finalists will visit the campus Jan. 31-Feb. 1 and Feb. 3-4. Open forums for those candidates will

occur on Feb. 1 and Feb. 4, both at 2 p.m. in the Downing Student Union.



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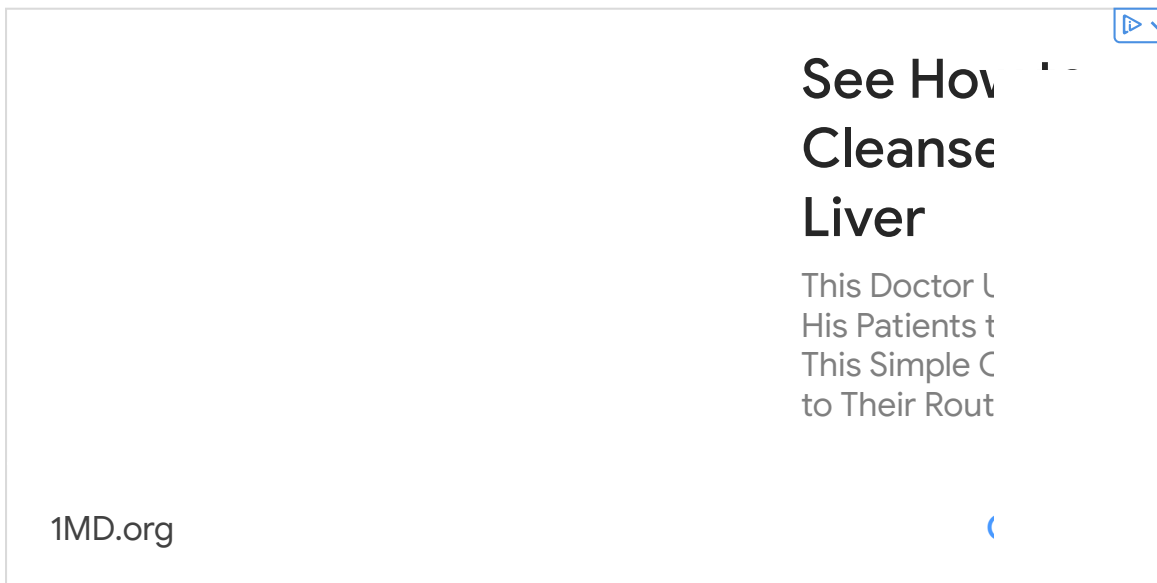
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The open forums will have first-come-first-served seating capacity and Zoom access for those who wish to attend remotely, the memo said.

Stevens stepped up from her position as dean of the Ogden College of Science and Engineering in April 2019 to become acting provost after former Provost Terry Ballman.

At the time, Ballman resigned from the role under pressure from faculty and a formal rebuke of her leadership in the form of a no-confidence vote by WKU's Faculty Senate. Ballman was WKU President Timothy Caboni's first significant hire as president.



“I am proud of what I have accomplished in my career and at WKU, both in my deanship and as Acting Provost,” Stevens wrote to her colleagues Tuesday. “I am grateful for the support that so many of you have given me, both personally and professionally, in these roles. When the pandemic has passed, I look forward to celebrating with you in person as I transition to the next phase of my life. Meanwhile, we have much work to accomplish this semester as we work our way out of this health crisis and to set the stage for new academic leadership to join us next fall.”

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