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# Former dean charged with heading botanical garden

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Marla McIntosh wants to beautify the campus and help students create fonder collegiate memories.

And after being officially announced as the interim director of the university's Arboretum and Botanical Garden yesterday, she may be able to do just that. In her two-year position, McIntosh will oversee the trees on the campus and integrate their beauty into the campus's landscape.

After taking the job earlier this semester, McIntosh - a professor and former associate dean for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources - said she plans to enhance students' college experience through improving and maintaining the campus's trees.

"Campus is where we all live," McIntosh said. "It makes you feel better to be able [to] sit and have lunch and talk."

The tools McIntosh will use to create a memorable landscape for students are different than those of a typical arboretum director. The search committee that hired her envisioned someone who specialized in horticulture or landscape management, McIntosh said. But McIntosh is just as qualified despite her different background, saying, "I bring something very different by understanding people in a green space."

Her background, she said, will help the university's specific challenges with the arboretum.

"We are an urban forest," she said. "Urban forestry is about people living within the trees and landscape. We have to be an urban forest. As a campus community, this is part of us."

But, McIntosh's position isn't permanent; instead, she plans to "rebuild the foundation" before the department can hire a full-time director.

To become an urban forest and not just a place where people visit, McIntosh said fundraising is a top priority.

"We are going to need significant donations for the arboretum, as we envision it," McIntosh said. "We need significant improvements. We're hoping to get support from alumni to make improvements to the campus landscape and environment."

Fellow arboretum committee members seem to think she is in a good position to do that, and are excited about McIntosh's role.

"The addition of McIntosh as the director of the campus arboretum is an excellent and necessary step in our efforts to elevate the Arboretum's status to a regionally and nationally recognized environmental stewardship icon," Coordinator of Landscape Services Taylor Keen said. "Her ability to coordinate the joint efforts of the campus administration, Facilities Management and Planning, and the plant science department and urban forestry program will be invaluable."

Another of McIntosh's assets is her knowledge of the campus's history. She established relationships with both academics and administrators since becoming a professor in 1979.

She said she will continue to juggle these relationships with both her academic and administrative calendars while expanding the program.

"I need to be in the classroom," McIntosh said. "Students are the primary users of campus."

McIntosh said she hopes the arboretum will welcome more students into the initiative.

"Once we get going, we will get student volunteers," she added. "It's educational and fun for those of us who like to dig in the dirt."

McIntosh, who graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said she associated many of her college memories with trees on that campus. She also has strong feelings about the trees on this campus, noting her favorite tree is a white oak across from the Mitchell Building by the Memorial Chapel.

"It has an amazing shape," McIntosh said. "It's almost welcoming people because the branches are so low."

She hopes the arboretum will supply graduates with an opportunity to come back and enjoy the same landscape they left behind.

"You can come back year after year after you graduate, and [the campus] will look better," McIntosh said.

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