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Farewell to a Mentor | College of Engineering

06/24/2016

USU Engineering Dean Departs for New Role at Texas State University

June 24, 2016 – After 22 years of service to Utah State University, College of Engineering Dean Dr. Christine Hailey will step down to begin a new leadership role in Texas and to be closer to family.



Hailey has been named the new dean of the College of Science and Engineering at Texas State University in San Marcos, midway between Austin and San Antonio. She will lead one of the state's largest academic institutions that houses seven departments including biology, chemistry & biochemistry, computer science, engineering technology, materials science, mathematics, physics and the Ingram School of Engineering.

A native of Boulder, Colo., Hailey holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Colorado State University, Fort Collins, and master's and doctorate degrees in mechanical engineering from The University of Oklahoma. She worked for nine years as an engineer at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, N.M., and began teaching at Utah State in 1994 as an assistant professor in the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Department. She was named dean in 2013 and in a short time has ushered in significant improvements including nearly doubling female undergraduate enrollment and laying the groundwork for Utah's first PhD program in aerospace engineering.

Hailey advocated for differential tuition to help cover the costs of lab upgrades, teaching assistants and student design projects. She also championed increased diversity in USU's engineering programs with her ongoing support of the student chapter of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers and other student programs.

Hailey announced earlier this year that she and her husband, David, would move to Texas to be closer to their daughter and two grandchildren. She says leaving USU and Cache Valley was no easy decision.

"There is something special about Utah State," she said. "Every day I see our faculty, our advisors and administrators taking an extra step to help a student achieve a little more."



Hailey's colleagues say they'll miss her leadership and tireless commitment to improving the student experience.

"Chris has been a great colleague focused on creating a world-class university," said Dr. Mark McLellan, USU Vice President for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies. "Her passion for teaching, research and outreach speaks to her commitment to the land-grant and space-grant missions of this university."

Dr. Robert Spall, Department Head for Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at USU, has worked closely with Hailey for many years as the department grew to become one of the largest on the USU campus.

"Chris Hailey was a member of the search committee when I interviewed here 20 years ago," said Spall. "Ever since, she has proven to be a wonderful colleague and a good friend."

Dr. Stacie Gregory, a USU alumna and research fellow at the Washington, D.C.-based American Association of University Women, said Hailey was one of the most supportive administrators she ever worked with.

“Having someone in my corner who wanted me to succeed was what helped me along,” said Gregory.



Looking back on her education and career so far, Hailey is quick to credit others who have influenced and mentored her. In fact, it was an early mentor at the University of Oklahoma who saw a potential engineer in Hailey who, at the time, was working as a technical typist for an engineering department.

“He said to me, ‘you have a degree in math; what are you doing working as a typist?’” she recalled. “He told me to take a fluid mechanics course from him just to see what engineering was about. So I did, and I nailed it because that course and others like it are based on math.”

That mentor who steered Hailey toward her lifelong profession was Dr. Martin Jischke, a faculty member at UO’s School of Aerospace, Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering who would eventually become the tenth president of Purdue University and a renowned leader in American higher education.

“Martin Jischke had a magical way of reaching out to people and helping to paint a picture of what they could become,” said Hailey. “Which is why mentorship is so important to me.”

Hailey’s new role officially begins July 1. She will pass the baton to USU College of Engineering Sr. Associate Dean Dr. Jagath Kaluarachchi who has been asked to serve as interim dean.

Kaluarachchi has a PhD in environmental sciences and engineering from Virginia Tech and has been active in areas of hydrology, water resources and water quality for the past 25 years. He joined the USU engineering faculty in 1991 and has served as an associate dean since 2007 and as senior associate dean since 2012.

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Classroom photo courtesy: The Herald Journal/John Zsiray

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