



CNHP Dean Susan Hanrahan Announces Retirement in 2021

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JONESBORO – Dr. Susan Hanrahan, who has overseen the expansion and success of the College of Nursing and Health Professions at Arkansas State University into one of the premier colleges in the nation, has announced she will retire from university service, effective June 30, 2021.

“Susan is one of the longest tenured deans in the history of Arkansas State, and what she has done for this university during her long career is remarkable,” Chancellor Kelly Dampousse said. “As I made my transition into A-State, we developed a friendship and I have leaned on her for advice many times. She has set the standard in her profession and raised the profile of our College of Nursing and Health Professions to one of the best, not just in the state or Delta region, but as a leader nationally. She has also been a key member of our strategic planning initiative, and along with her work in her college, will leave an impressive legacy.”

A nationwide search to locate Hanrahan’s replacement will begin later this academic year.

Hanrahan began her administrative career with A-State when she was selected in an interim capacity in 1995 by the late Dr. Eugene W. Smith, who was interim president of the university at that time. She was appointed to the permanent position in July 1996 by former president Dr. Les Wyatt after a national search.

“The growth and development of the college, its faculty, staff, students and alumni have been my heart and soul for 25-plus years,” Hanrahan said. “I know that we have positively impacted the healthcare workforce with our varied programs and degree levels and have made a difference in the lives of so many.

“Many of the faculty and administrators that I worked with to grow the college have already retired. My current college team has a solid foundation for moving forward and that means a lot to me — the ability to continue to be successful and make a difference.”

Throughout her professional career, Hanrahan has been active in research, teaching and community service. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in physical therapy from the University of Kansas and went on to complete her master’s in public administration. She received her PhD in health education at Temple University and has completed summer work at the University of Michigan in epidemiology.

However, she much prefers to talk about the successes of the College of Nursing and Health Professions instead of about herself.

After joining Arkansas State, Hanrahan immediately began a passionate journey that soon led to the establishment of additional programs most of which hold national accreditation including disaster preparedness and emergency management, EMT/paramedic, diagnostic medical sonography, radiation therapy, magnetic resonance imaging, nurse anesthesia, doctorate in nursing practice, health studies, nurse practitioner, occupational therapy, physical therapy, athletic training and coordinated program in dietetics. Communication disorders came to the college in 1997 and social work in 2003. A Master’s in Social Work was added shortly thereafter.

“When you look at the service programs, the Speech and Hearing Center came to CNHP when communication disorders came to the college in 1997,” Hanrahan continued. “We have grown and expanded it a lot under the direction of Arianne Pait (assistant professor of communication disorders). Outside of Title IV-E, which is our child welfare grant, everything

else has been developed since 1995 including Healthy Agers, A-State CARE and the Dr. Roy Aldridge Hippotherapy Program.

“Ideas come from faculty and community needs, they were evaluated for ‘good fit’ and ‘doability’ before we ventured into their establishment. My role was to facilitate the good ideas, find funding and keep them moving. These programs support our academic, research, service delivery and interprofessional education missions. They are an excellent complement to our academic degrees.”

Under her tutelage, the nursing program is now the School of Nursing and is labeled as one of the nation’s leading collegiate disciplines.

“Our nursing program does get a lot of recognition, although we have many quality nationally-accredited programs in the college. For all programs in CNHP, I think we can attribute our success to selectively admitted students, quality faculty and staff support, excellent laboratory experiences, and opportunities in 700-plus health care sites to do actual clinical experiences before students graduate.

“Add that to student-centered support, research opportunities, interprofessional education, service delivery experiences, great student organizations and the list goes on. Parents should know that students are in great hands when they come to CNHP for a health career.”

In addition to ensuring students are receiving an exceptional education in those various fields, Hanrahan is extremely proud of several accomplishments, including the \$14.5 million gift from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation to construct a new academic health facility and the creation of Beck Center for Veterans to provide combat wounded veterans with first class educational programs and services at Arkansas State, including resources to access the higher education experience, resources for counseling, personal rehabilitation, advocacy, and financial assistance and supporting these individuals to achieve their post military service goals.

“The gift from the Reynolds Foundation was a game changer for our college,” Hanrahan stated. “It was a long application and approval process. The most difficult part was that it had to remain confidential. The building and its contents allowed us to move to the ‘next’ level. It provided an opportunity for real ‘new’ space, continued growth and development including additional state-of-art labs and quality learning spaces. The building is 10 years old and still looks brand new.

“The creation of the Beck Center for Veterans has become a signature university program. Buddy Beck (a 1959 graduate from A-State) and his wife Charlotte Beck worked with Chancellor Robert Potts and me to create the concept. Many others have worked to move the program to where it is today. The testimonials of the veterans it has impacted will live with me forever. It is absolutely the best program I was ever involved with developing.”

Hanrahan is also active in community, state and national ventures including many leadership roles. Two worth noting are that she served as president for the Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions in Washington, D.C. and was chair of the Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Commission in Little Rock.

“Sometimes in life you come across individuals that have had a meaningful and profound impact on a broad range of issues,” said Chris Barber, president and CEO of St. Bernards Healthcare. “Susan created a legacy, starting with effectively advancing the improvement of healthcare for our region and state, impacting lives positively along the way. She was relentless in her pursuit of exploring innovative solutions to make a difference while fully engaged. Susan is one of those leaders that can certainly make things happen. Congratulations on a job well done!”

In addition to building meaningful relationships within the community, Hanrahan will miss her time at A-State — especially her associations with faculty, staff and students.

“I have worked with many wonderful people at A-State, some of which I keep in touch with like Irene Martz who was so helpful to me when I arrived with her wealth of historical knowledge and MENSA mind,” Hanrahan said. Martz, an employee in Academic Affairs, retired in 2005 after 48 years of service. “Without supporters like her, there is no way to accomplish so many things in a relatively short period. The university has certainly changed in my years here and thank goodness for change. I do wish them well.”

Hanrahan is humble about leaving a legacy at Arkansas State.

“I do not think you are supposed to count ‘years in job’ as legacy. I do know that the college is in a much different position than when I started, but I can’t attribute that just to me. So, I just say this — there is a quote that I have always liked which says, ‘The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.’ I hope my time here has had that effect because we will need this college for many years to come.”

And, what is on the horizon for Dean Hanrahan? “Find another job where I can learn new things, be engaged, use my energy and passion, and make a difference.”

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Photo attached: Dr. Susan Hanrahan

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