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A Call to Lead

03.10.2009 | Faculty

Joseph Saliba, a civil engineer who rose through the academic ranks at the University of Dayton over the past 25 years, has been named provost at his alma mater following a national search.

Saliba, 54, has served in the role in an interim capacity since July. The provost is the chief academic officer of the University.

"Joe brings so many gifts to the table. He's familiar with every aspect of the institution and offers a global perspective on higher education that will lead the University of Dayton into the future," said Daniel J. Curran, president. He's a highly collaborative leader with a strong commitment to the University's Catholic, Marianist identity. He believes passionately in the power of a University of Dayton education to transform students' lives.

Saliba would be the first to say that the University of Dayton transformed his life. He escaped from war-torn Lebanon in the 1970s, eventually finding his way to the University of Dayton. Despite knowing little English, he earned three degrees in six years; a bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. in civil engineering.

"I'm honored and humbled at the trust Dr. Curran, the search committee and the entire University of Dayton community have afforded me," Saliba said. "I look forward to advancing the University of Dayton as a comprehensive university and working with the faculty to revise the undergraduate curriculum. I will bring people to the table and develop the kind of new programs we do best at the University, those that require deep collaboration and fit our mission."

As a University of Dayton doctoral student, he worked as a research engineer in the department of civil engineering and engineering mechanics. In 1984, the department hired him as an assistant professor. He was appointed chair of the department in 1996, then became dean of the School of Engineering in 2004. During his tenure as dean, engineering enrollment soared to a record high, sponsored research climbed and the graduate programs received national recognition. The University of Dayton performs more sponsored, non-medical research than any Catholic university in the nation, and its graduate engineering programs rank third in the state and 64th in the country, according to U.S. News & World Report.

Saliba received strong endorsement from trustees, faculty, staff and students who participated in campus interviews, according to Tom Lasley, dean of the School of Education and Allied Professions, who co-chaired the search committee.

"He lives and is able to articulate the Marianist charism and clearly understands the role of Catholic higher education," the search committee wrote in its analysis of the three finalists. "His support for diversity and intercultural initiatives is well-documented. His approach to leadership has been highly collaborative, working with faculty of other academic and administrative units. He has a track record of securing external funding, both for research and non-research dollars."

In February, Saliba won the University of Dayton's 2009 Lackner Award for his dedication to the University's Catholic, Marianist mission. It's one of the highest honors given by the University.

The University of Dayton, founded by the Society of Mary (Marianists) in 1850, is a top-tier national research university, one of the top-10 Catholic universities in the country and the largest private university in Ohio. The University enrolls nearly 11,000 students — from the undergraduate to the Ph.D. level — from 50 states and 60 countries who are taught by more than 450 full-time faculty.