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Philosophy of Deanship

05.29.2007 | Faculty  When Paul Benson steps into his new role as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Dayton on June 4, he will rely on some of the traits he has developed as a teacher and scholar of philosophy.

Benson, who has served as associate dean for integrated learning and curriculum at UD since 2005, will lead more than 50 undergraduate and graduate programs and 240 full-time faculty in his new role.

His philosophical training, he said, has taught him to appreciate multiple perspectives and to approach others from a standpoint of empathy. "You begin by listening to what the other person is saying and why they find their beliefs to be reasonable," he said.

Benson also thinks that philosophers bring imagination to the task, "the ability to see beyond the immediate appearance of things and to conceive of alternatives that hadn't been considered."

Benson has put those qualities to work throughout his 22-year career at the University of Dayton, where he has served as Core program director, humanities base assessment coordinator and philosophy department chair.

He also participated in the inaugural class of Marianist Educational Associates, a corps of lay faculty and administrators dedicated to preserving UD's Marianist heritage. In addition, he chaired the Marianist Education Working Group, which has recommended ways to redesign the undergraduate curriculum.

"My primary love as an academic is teaching and writing philosophy," said Benson, whose articles and book chapters have earned him an international reputation. He specializes in ethics and moral psychology.

Benson received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from St. Olaf College in 1979. He was awarded a four-year Danforth Graduate Fellowship and a one-year Whiting Foundation Dissertation Fellowship to pursue doctoral work at Princeton, where he received his Ph.D. in philosophy in 1984. He taught at Virginia Tech and the University of Vermont before coming to the University of Dayton in 1985.

Benson succeeds Mary Morton, who will become provost and vice president for academic affairs at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn., after a three-year stint as dean.

Benson, who grew up in the Chicago area, lives in the Oregon District in Dayton.

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