USNH Selects Donald L. Birx as Next PSU President

Plymouth, NH—The University System of New Hampshire announced today that Donald L. Birx, Ph.D., will become the 15th president of Plymouth State University on July 31, 2015. The USNH Board of Trustees voted unanimously to support the selection of Birx after a nationwide search.

“We are excited to welcome Dr. Donald Birx as the new president of Plymouth State University,” stated University System of New Hampshire board chair, Pamela Diamantis. “While Dr. Birx comes with a deep commitment to preserving the value and traditions that have made PSU a strong partner in the North Country, he also has a well-established track record of forging external relationships with the business community and organizations that enable students to explore experiential learning opportunities that will be of great value to our next generation workforce. A commitment to PSU’s sense of community with a proven ability to chart a new and bold course makes Dr. Birx an ideal choice to lead Plymouth State University into the future.”

Birx echoed this sentiment, “I’m a builder and a collaborator. Vision, strategy and partnership will be critical in positioning Plymouth for the years ahead and building on the excellent foundation laid by past presidents, faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members. Going forward, it will be just as important for all of us to work together to realize our shared vision of success.”

“We ran a very thorough and rigorous search process,” commented Jude Blake, University System trustee and co-chair of the search committee. “We were impressed by the depth of the candidate pool and the candidates’ commitment to public higher education. Dr. Birx immediately distinguished himself during the interview process with his leadership skills, vision and rich experience.”
USNH Chancellor Dr. Todd Leach said, “Higher education is constantly evolving. To meet the demands for our state’s future workforce, our campus leaders must be nimble and visionary. It’s incumbent upon higher education leaders to anticipate economic need and prepare the necessary skilled workforce. Don is a proven leader who will have a positive impact on Plymouth State University as well as the University System of New Hampshire.”

Describing Plymouth State, Birx added, “When I spoke with students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members during my visit, the pride in what has been accomplished at Plymouth was evident. That’s important; it tells me that those who matter most are of one mind and invested in the future of this university. I appreciate the role of the current president, Dr. Sara Jayne Steen, in unifying the university community and bringing Plymouth to this point. I was impressed by the trustees’ and chancellor’s care and appreciation for this university and community. They clearly see a bright future here.”

Most recently, Birx served as the chancellor of Pennsylvania State University, Behrend College, and was responsible for the quality of the college’s academic programs in teaching, research and service, and its overall operations, including strategic planning, human resources, enrollment management, fundraising, marketing, alumni and community relations, intercollegiate athletics and outreach.

Before joining Penn State Behrend, Birx served as vice chancellor and vice president for research for the University of Houston System (UH). His accomplishments there included the initiation of systemwide, multidisciplinary clusters that spanned UH’s colleges and campuses, focusing on strategic collaboration in the areas of nano-materials, energy and natural resources, biomedicine, complex systems, community advancement and education, and arts and human enrichment. At UH, Dr. Birx founded the Center for Industrial Partnerships, a joint endeavor to translate research to practical applications and increase interplay between the business community and the university’s research faculty. In addition, he held the appointment of full professor of electrical engineering.

Prior to his work at UH, Dr. Birx was interim vice provost/president for research and professor of physics at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. Dr. Birx began his career in academia following industry experience with Systems Research Laboratories, Inc., in Dayton, Ohio, where he advanced from senior scientist to principal investigator, then general manager of the company’s intelligent systems division, and finally vice president and team leader of technology and new ventures.

Dr. Birx holds a bachelor’s degree in engineering physics from the University of California, Berkeley; a master’s degree in physics and an MBA in finance, both from Miami University of Ohio; and a doctorate in electrical engineering from the University of Dayton. He and his wife, Linda, have four children.