

# Thomas University hires Sheppard as president, communication professor appointed interim provost

By **Kylie Stamper**  
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For 18 years, Tracy Frederick, professor of communication, has taught communication courses at Southwestern College. In her 19th year at Southwestern, Frederick will add another title to her resume: interim provost. This change comes after the announcement that Andy Sheppard, provost, has accepted a job as president of Thomas University in Thomasville, Ga. Sheppard, who was appointed provost in 2014, has worked at Southwestern in some capacity since 1997. As he prepares to move on to his next step, he says the one thing he will miss the most about Southwestern is the people.

He said, "We've built a very special college with a very unique culture and it's been an amazing experience." When Sheppard takes the next step in his life on July 1, Frederick will step in to become the interim provost for two years while a committee searches for a new provost.

A provost, in simplest terms, is the chief academic officer tasked with upholding the academic vision of the college. Sheppard also works with international student efforts, the Center for Belarusian Studies, professional studies, military programs, and main campus.

Sheppard was the first provost at the college so the job description has been tailored to fit his talents. This means that part of Frederick's duties as interim provost will be to develop a job description that can be presented when hiring the next provost.

Brad Andrews, president, asked Frederick to consider accepting the position of interim provost for two years. Frederick said, "For me it's a little bit of a risk, but it's only for two years. I may enjoy it and I may not. I like academics and I like education but what's attractive to me is the idea of offering some positive energy and some way that I could contribute to continue



(Kylie Stamper/Collegian photographer)

Andy Sheppard has worked at Southwestern for 19 years and was named provost in 2014. Sheppard will take on the position of President at Thomas University July 1, 2016.

to help Southwestern be a great place for students."

Frederick's first concern after being offered the job was what would become of the classes she typically offered. She established that there were two factors in her decision to accept the interim provost job. The first was a commitment to her courses and her division so that her absence would not burden other communication professors. The second factor was that the arrangements for her classes would not affect graduation requirements for communication majors.

"[President Andrews] was very committed, he wanted to make sure it didn't jeopardize the program, the integrity of the program, and that students were able to graduate, and that there would be a commitment from the institution to provide quality adjuncts," said Frederick. Her final concern was being able to go back to her teaching job after the two-year appointment.

While Frederick accepted the position, she says she will still miss everything about being in the classroom. "I will miss the students and the great times when you're in class. The engagement is energizing for me," she said.

As she makes the transition and gets used to her new title,

Frederick is already working hard to fulfill her duties as interim provost.

"I've spent a lot of my time already talking to people and listening to people. I have been reaching out to people and listening and letting them know that I am here as a support person to try to help them get whatever resources they need to do their job better. What I want to do is to work with them collaboratively," said Frederick, "I want them to know I'm here and I want to work alongside them and I think it's going to be terrific."

Andrews said one of Frederick's three most important duties will include making sure that the administration of academic affairs runs as smoothly as possible. The second duty will be to handle issues with parents, student concerns, and different areas and the third is to present a confident decision on issues that arise within the leadership roles in the faculty, division chairs, and deans.

Overall, Frederick's goal is to turn her position as interim provost into a service position for the college. Part of serving the college, she says, is to help bring the president's vision to life. She said, "The president has a vision of how Southwestern can move forward and my job will be to help him do that. At the end of



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Tracy Frederick, professor of communication, has taught at Southwestern for 18 years. Frederick will serve as interim provost for two years.

the two years, our success will be determined by if we have a really great positive place, a place where people feel valued, where people feel heard, where people are excited to do their jobs, and where they feel they can be successful in their jobs."

Sheppard said, "Tracy will bring perspective. Bringing people to the table and helping them to discuss issues and helping them to find the right solutions is truly a gift, Tracy is very gifted at that, that's a tremendous asset that she brings to the bunch. It's going to be hard on her to leave the classroom, though."

Andrews said, "I think Tracy is going to be fantastic in this role. Since I have arrived on

campus I have come to respect and admire Tracy and her professionalism, for her intellect, for her many skills. I think that Tracy is a great listener. She's a careful thinker, I think she does an excellent job in listening to everyone and considering all sides, and making thoughtful and sensitive and considerate decisions and to me those are the skills in Tracy that stood out which is why I reached out to appoint her. And for all those reasons, I think she is the perfect person to lead us through the next two years until we get our next provost on board."

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