

# Brennan Randolph named 17th president of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College

By SUE LOUGHLIN  
TRIBUNE-STAR

Brennan J. Randolph has been named the 17th president of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

The college's board of trustees unanimously approved his appointment and five-year contract effective Friday.

"This is a good news day," Alice Sherfick Shelton, chair of the SMWC board of trustees, said during a news conference at The Woods.

Randolph has been the interim president since July 1, 2023, after Dottie L. King announced her resignation to become the president and CEO of Independent Colleges of Indiana.

"I do not take the role that I have accepted as the



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New Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College President Brennan Randolph shares a light moment with the audience on Friday in SMWC's Le Fer Hall.

17th president lightly. I know there is a tall order ahead of me," Randolph said during the news conference at LeFer Hall. "I look forward to five years of service to this institution."

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New Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College President Brennan Randolph, right, shakes hands with Mayor Brandon Sakbun after the press conference to announce that he has been named the 17th president of the college on Friday in SMWC's Le Fer Hall.

## President

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Trustees knew early on that Randolph was the right person for the job, and the process never opened to consider other candidates, Shelton said.

She likened it to a 13-month interview process, to which Randolph responded, "This has absolutely been the longest interview process I have ever been in, in my entire life."

Certain qualities stood out, Shelton said, including his humility. He always makes decisions based on what is best for students, she said.

He is transparent, and that is a hallmark of his leadership, she said. "It takes courage to be transparent."

Also, Randolph is guided by deep faith, Shelton said.

Randolph had told her that in making Friday's announcement, he wanted the light to shine on the college, not on him.

Because Randolph is a layperson, and not Catholic, the process of naming him president involved an endorsement by Indianapolis Archbishop Charles Thompson. SMWC is a Catholic college.

Randolph's appointment also required the support of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and its committee on Catholic education.

Sister Dawn Tomaszewski, general superior of the Sisters of Providence and an SMWC board of trustee member, expressed the Sisters of Providence "whole-hearted support" for Randolph as the 17th president.

Randolph outlined some of his goals during the press conference.

"SMWC has absolutely celebrated growth in our enrollment in recent years with the addition of high quality academic programs, along with new athletic teams," he said.

With this growth, the college has invested significantly in much needed infrastructure and deferred maintenance, and there is more work to do.

"As we move forward, we will consider new partnerships and collaborations that could provide new pathways to fund projects or to add new facilities," he said.

Also, with over 50 years of experience in online or distance education, SMWC is poised to launch this delivery method in new ways that could open doors to new, sustainable revenue streams in the future, Randolph said.

He started at SMWC in 2015 as the vice president for enrollment management.

"The board of trustees and the college community have seen close-up the strong leadership and care Brennan has brought to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College," Shelton



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Members of the audience applaud as Brennan Randolph is introduced as the 17th president of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College on Friday in SMWC's Le Fer Hall.

said in a statement.

Higher education in 2024 requires leaders who have qualities of humility, service, creativity, courage and decisiveness, she said.

"His commitment to today's Woods students and the future of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College is clear and palpable," Shelton stated.

In a news release, Randolph said he was humbled and grateful to be chosen to lead the historic institution.

"Saint Mother Theodore Guerin's mission holds true to this day, and I remain focused on it, just as we have for the past 184 years," Randolph said. "I am happy to be a part of a faculty and staff that arrive at work each day focused on a rich student experience, both academically and culturally. Our future is bright, and the college will continue to innovate while honoring our traditions."

During Randolph's tenure at the college, he has overseen the enrollment growth for the campus program to historical levels and a more streamlined admission and financial aid process.

He oversaw the athletic department as the college's teams grew from seven scholarship teams to 18. During that time, SMWC athletics moved to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and became part of the River States Conference (RSC).

Randolph has 26 years of experience in higher education leadership. Prior to arriving at The Woods, Randolph was campus president of Harrison College, and his 17-year tenure at Harrison College included managing all aspects of the college as campus president, assistant executive director, director of education, accounting supervisor and financial aid analyst.

Randolph and his wife Beth have two children, a son Caleb and a daughter Madison, who is a 2024 graduate of SMWC in nursing. He earned his master of business administration from Indiana Wesleyan University and his bachelor of business administration from Northwood University in Midland, Michigan.

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