

Dear Colleagues:

It is with mixed emotions I write you with the news that Provost Maria Cimitile has decided to conclude her service as provost. I support my colleague and friend Maria's charting of her future course and want to commend her service. She fulfilled a critical role at a unique time of transition, uncharted territory and institutional transformation.

Maria's time as provost began with establishing a new chapter following the retirements of Provost Gayle Davis and President Emeritus Thomas Haas, the arrival of a new president, and the challenge of a global pandemic. Those transitions did not shake her resolve to make those of us at Grand Valley State University the best we could be. All of us - faculty, staff, students and the Board of Trustees - are in her debt. On a personal note, I want to thank Maria for her wise counsel, her candor, and her endless availability as I prepared for my arrival at Grand Valley, and in the months, now years, that followed. I could not have been better served.

Maria's accomplishments as provost are many. The recent 10-year reaccreditation of Grand Valley by the Higher Learning Commission notes the academic quality of the university and mentions particularly the role of the provost in this outcome. On her watch, the expansion of Grand Valley's programs in the health professions has made GVSU the state's largest provider of allied health professionals at a time of critical need for these skilled graduates. Maria's dedication to inclusion, equity, and diversity is witnessed across the curriculum and embedded into the ethos of our mission.

Maria always advances our work upholding our commitment to, and practice of, shared governance. It is the glue that brings both form and substance to Grand Valley's culture and community. It is elemental to our institution - past, present, and future. That commitment also informs Maria's style: transparent, collegial, thoughtful, respectful, always a listener, and when the time comes to make decisions, generous in understanding how others may be impacted. These are the qualities that have made her admired and respected across the institution. I'm grateful to Maria for her steady hand and for laying the foundation that will enable an orderly transition.

I have asked Chris Plouff, Maria's deputy and senior associate vice president, to step up as interim provost, and he has agreed. We will form a search committee to guide us as we seek the next provost. I have asked Professor Felix Ngassa, chair of the University Academic Senate, and Dean Paul Stansbie, Acting Dean of College of Community and Public Service, to be co-chairs of the search, again reinforcing our commitment to shared governance.

Please join me in thanking Maria for all she has done to help lead this great institution and to give her every good wish on the road ahead.

Sincerely,  
Philomena V. Mantella, President