



Professor Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer

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TO: Boston University Faculty and Staff

FROM: Robert A. Brown, University President
Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer

DATE: August 29, 2022

SUBJECT: Appointment of Wendy Colby as Vice President and Associate Provost
for BU Virtual

Last December, as you may recall, we [announced](#) a national search for a new leadership position, charged with further developing and supporting Boston University's growing presence in online education as a key pillar of our [2030 Strategic Plan](#). After a process that considered several exceptional candidates with diverse backgrounds and experience from across the country, we are very pleased to announce the appointment of Wendy Colby as BU's inaugural vice president and associate provost for BU Virtual, effective September 12. BU Virtual is the new umbrella brand for all of BU's online graduate degrees and certificate programs. This initiative was previously referred to in various forums as online programs at-scale and online learning initiatives.

Wendy brings more than 25 years of leadership and expertise in online and hybrid program creation and development, working closely with major institutions across higher education to lead, design, implement, support, and scale high-quality degree and certificate offerings. Since February 2020, she has served as chief executive officer of UMGC Ventures/AccelerEd in College Park, MD, a portfolio of education technology and services businesses affiliated with the University of Maryland Global Campus (serving over 90,000 students) and the broader University System of Maryland's 12 regional campuses, working collaboratively with university leaders to design new programs, adopt new modalities to reach more students, and take workforce programs online.

Prior to UMGC Ventures, Wendy was divisional vice president at Laureate Education in Baltimore, where she led the development, commercialization, and scale of digital learning solutions for over 80 universities around the world, and where she served in numerous executive positions, including leading the College of Nursing at Walden University, overseeing enrollment, marketing, portfolio management, online program development, and profit and loss operations. She has additionally held senior leadership roles with Carnegie Innovations (an affiliate of Carnegie Mellon University), Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Thomson Reuters, and Silicon Valley-based startup DigitalThink, guiding digital transformation efforts and growing new business in the corporate online learning space.

As BU's first vice president and associate provost for BU Virtual, Wendy will be responsible for leading a new unit that will support the development, production, recruitment for and delivery of online programs and will operate in collaboration with our schools and colleges. Among the top early priorities will be the ongoing evolution of the Questrom School of Business's [online MBA](#) program and the launch of the School of Public Health's [online Master of Public Health](#) program in January 2023. Included within the organization of this new unit will be:

- The Online Special Programs Team, formerly the Instructional Production Services Team within Digital Learning & Innovation, which comprises learning designers, media producers, and course operations specialists;
- The Office of Distance Education, formerly housed in Metropolitan College, which supports more than 20 online degree programs, 30 graduate certificates, and 15 BU Hub undergraduate courses across 14 schools and colleges; and
- A new BU Virtual Advisory Council, chaired by the vice president and associate provost, which will provide advice, expertise, and critical thinking and will assist in the evaluation and prioritization of projects and associated resources.

From our conversations with Wendy throughout this process, it was evident early on that her extensive team leadership experience, history of collaboratively driving innovation and student success with major institutions, and vision for leveraging and growing BU's online and hybrid programs to align with market demand and reach new audiences of learners make her an ideal fit for this new role. She holds a bachelor's degree from Illinois State University and a master's degree from the University of San Francisco.

As we prepare for Wendy to formally join BU, we want to give special thanks to Kenneth Freeman, dean emeritus and professor of the practice, Questrom School of Business, for his outstanding service as interim vice president and associate provost for online programs at-scale. Handed the formidable task last winter of building the online learning initiatives unit (including defining and setting its organizational structure) and facilitating early-stage development of the online Master of Public Health, Dean Freeman has provided the thoughtful, dynamic leadership we've needed to get this new unit off the ground and ready for its important work. Dean Freeman also chaired our search advisory committee for the new vice president and associate provost role, and we'd like to thank him and the committee members (listed below) for their time, expertise, and extraordinary diligence in completing a successful search.

The launch of BU Virtual marks an exciting time of growth and innovation for Boston University and our efforts to access and engage new learners around the world. Please join us in welcoming Wendy Colby and wishing her well in this critical new role.

cc: Provost's Cabinet

**Search Advisory Committee for the Vice President and Associate Provost
for BU Virtual**

Chair:

Kenneth Freeman, Interim Vice President and Associate Provost for Online Programs At-Scale;
Dean Emeritus and Professor of the Practice, Questrom School of Business

Members:

Paul Carlile, Senior Associate Dean for Online Learning; Professor of Information Systems,
Questrom School of Business

David Chard, Dean, Wheelock College of Education & Human Development

David Cotter, Assistant Provost for Graduate Enrollment Management & Master's and
Professional Student Support

Sandro Galea, Dean and Robert A. Knox Professor, School of Public Health

Suzanne Kennedy, Associate Provost for Special Projects & Emerging Priorities

Janet O'Brien, Senior Vice President for Applications and Enterprise Services, Information
Services & Technology

Romy Ruukel, Director of Digital Learning Initiatives, Digital Learning & Innovation

Willis G. Wang, Vice President and Associate Provost for Global Programs