



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BOARD OF REGENTS ELECTS NEW CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Downey-Schmidt of Inman and Shank of Liberal Assume Leadership Roles

(TOPEKA) – Last week the Kansas Board of Regents elected a new Chair and Vice Chair. On Thursday, June 28, the nine-member Board elected Christine Downey-Schmidt of Inman as the new Chair and Donna Shank of Liberal as the new Vice Chair – marking the first time in the Board’s 82-year history that two women have been selected to serve as Chair and Vice Chair simultaneously.

Christine Downey-Schmidt was appointed to the Board by Governor Kathleen Sebelius in 2005, has served as the Board’s Vice Chair since 2006, and has served as a member of the Board’s Academic Affairs Committee. A former Kansas State Senator, Downey-Schmidt was elected to three four-year terms, serving from 1992 to 2004.

Downey-Schmidt serves on the Boards of Directors of the Kansas Arts Commission and the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains in Hesston. In addition, she is a member of the Kansas Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution in North Newton and a member of the American Association of University Women.

Downey-Schmidt attended Wichita State University where she earned a B.A. in Elementary Education and a M.S. in Education Administration and Supervision. She enjoyed a twenty-year teaching career that ranged from the pre-school to college levels. She and her husband, Gordon, have four married children and six grandchildren.

“I am honored to assume the chairmanship of the Kansas Board of Regents,” said Downey-Schmidt. “While I will miss the talent and experience of the five out-going Regents, I will benefit from the experience of the three remaining members, and I am certainly looking forward to working with five new members who will bring with them a wide array of professional expertise. With the Board’s help, I look forward to moving the state’s higher education system forward in a strategic fashion and to addressing new challenges in the upcoming year.”

Donna Shank was originally appointed to the Board by Governor Bill Graves in 2002. She was reappointed to a second term by Governor Kathleen Sebelius in 2007, and will continue to serve Kansas as a Board Member through June 2010. Shank previously served as the Board’s Chair from 2005-2006, as the Vice Chair from 2004-2005, and has served as a member of the

Board's Academic Affairs Committee. She is the Vice President and Co-Owner of Al Shank Insurance, Inc. in Liberal, is an Accredited Advisor in Insurance, and has been a licensed insurance agent since 1984.

Shank currently serves on the Higher Learning Commission Accreditation Review Council, as a Wichita State University (WSU) Alumni Association member, on the Governor's Economic Policy Council, the Liberal High School Site Council, on the Board of the Kansas Business Hall of Fame, and as the Kansas Prosperity Summit Southwest Region Co-Chair. Her past civic involvement includes the Kansas Children's Cabinet, Kansas Council for the Future of Post-Secondary Education, Leadership Liberal Board Chair, Liberal Chamber Ambassador, and Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Industry Board Member.

Shank earned an associate's degree from Seward County Community College and a bachelor's degree from WSU. She is also a graduate of the Leadership Liberal and Leadership Kansas programs. Shank and her husband, Al, have three children.

"I look forward to my continued work and service on the Board of Regents," said Shank. "With the help of our new Regents, I look forward to partnering with the state's business and industry leaders, the Legislature, and the Governor to help meet the future needs of Kansas through our higher education system."

Downey-Schmidt and Shank will both serve one-year leadership terms.

Last week's Board meeting marked the last meeting for Regents Janice DeBauge of Emporia, Frank Gaines of Hamilton, Nelson Galle of Manhattan, and Jim Grier of Wichita. Dick Bond of Overland Park had previously resigned in March.

The four current Regents, Downey-Schmidt, Dan Lykins of Topeka, Janie Perkins of Garden City, and Shank, will be joined, pending confirmation by the Kansas Senate, by Jarold Boettcher of Beloit, Jill Docking of Wichita, Richard Hedges of Fort Scott, Gary Sherrer of Overland Park, and William Thornton of Atchison, who were appointed to the Board by Governor Kathleen Sebelius on June 14.

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