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Media Contact

Phanalphie Rhue

E: Phanalphie.Rhue@bennett.edu

O: (336) 907-0197

Bennett College President Suzanne Walsh Announces Resignation

Greensboro, NC – January 15, 2025 – Bennett College announced today that Suzanne Walsh will be stepping down from her role as President, effective June 30, 2025. Appointed in 2019, President Walsh led the College through an extraordinary era of change and achievement, leaving behind a legacy of innovation and steady stewardship. During her tenure, President Walsh strategically moved the College from critical to stable by focusing on stewardship of resources. She developed a radical, strategic direction that uniquely aligned with the historic social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion mission of the College, and, at the same time, clearly positioned the institution to be ‘Open to and for the Future.’ Under Walsh’s direction, Bennett College optimized its resources. The institution also underwent the arduous process of changing accreditors and moving from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to Transnational Association of Christian Colleges & Schools, (TRACS) a mission-aligned, accreditor recognized by The Council for Higher Education and the U.S. Department of Education.

Walsh’s signature higher education plan redesigned the traditional 16-week residential college model to a minimester model to help reduce cognitive load for students. As a result, student retention increased to over 85% for the past four years, well above the previous five years in the 50% range, and surpasses the nationwide average retention rate of 75.6% for full-time students from their first to second year. During Walsh’s tenure, faculty initiated and led a redesign of the curriculum to align programs and courses with the College’s mission.

During Walsh’s presidency, Bennett College also earned prestigious national acknowledgements including, recognition as Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leader for five consecutive years, ranked #1 in Social Mobility in 2022 and in 2022-23 by U.S. News and World Reports and designation as one of the nation’s “Best Women’s Colleges” by BestCollege.com in 2023.

North Carolina State Senator Gladys Robinson, who served as Board Chair for five years during Suzanne Walsh’s presidency, stated, “In 2019, I led the recruitment of Suzanne Walsh as the 19th president of Bennett College during a critical turning point for the institution. Suzanne emerged as a visionary leader who adeptly navigated the complexities of the academic landscape. Collaborating with the Bennett





community, she created a blueprint for transformational change that optimized the college, enhanced the student experience, and positioned us as leaders in social justice and mental health.”

In her resignation letter, President Walsh said, "I am so grateful for the opportunity to have led Bennett College through a period of significant transformation. Working with an incredible community of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumnae, we have improved the overall position of the College. Bennett College is well-situated for its next chapter of growth and impact."

“President Walsh came to Bennett College during a critical period and instilled not only fervent hope but a foundation of sustainability that will be part of her legacy. We deeply appreciate her strategic leadership, dedication, and contributions to Bennett College,” said, Cassandra Jones Havard, Chair of the Board of Trustees. “Throughout her tenure, President Walsh has demonstrated that she is an exceptionally skilled and visionary leader. Her contributions have strengthened Bennett’s ability to carry out its vital mission of preparing women of color for leadership roles and ensuring that Bennett College is ‘Open to and for the Future.’ The Board of Trustees is committed to a seamless transition as we move forward and continue Bennett’s tradition of excellence.”

An interim search firm will assist the Board of Trustees in identifying an interim president who will begin transitioning prior to President Walsh’s departure and formally will assume the role on July 1, 2025. The Trustees also will appoint a Presidential Search Committee to launch a comprehensive, national search for the next President of Bennett College.

About Bennett College:

Bennett College, celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2023, empowers women of color through a transformative liberal arts education, fostering purpose, integrity, and self-worth. Recognized as the #1 national liberal arts college for social mobility in 2022 and a 2022-2023 Best College for Social Mobility by U.S. News & World Report, Bennett is also a Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leader for five consecutive years. With an average retention rate of 85% and a designation as a Top 25 Women’s College by BestColleges.com, Bennett College is committed to academic excellence and to creating equitable futures.

Founded in 1873 and chartered as a college for women in 1926, Bennett is dedicated to cultivating bold leaders, entrepreneurs, and agents of social change. Through an integrated approach to intellectual, social, and spiritual development, the College promotes educational access, inquiry, civic engagement, social justice, lifelong learning, and equity for all.

Known for its intimate and engaging learning community, Bennett College produces exceptional women scholars and global leaders.





Institutional Points of Pride

- Bennett College's innovative minimester system decreased cognitive load and increased first-year student retention to 90%. Nationwide, based on IPEDS data, retention from first to second year for full-time students is 75.6%.
- 63% of students participate in internships, research, or other experiential learning activities with companies and organizations like Carnegie Mellon University, CISCO Systems, Inc., Michigan State University, The Walt Disney Company, and University of Delaware.
- Recognized as a Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leader for 5 consecutive years.
- Ranked #1 in Social Mobility in 2022 and a 2022-2023 Best College by U.S. News & World Report and designated as one of the nation's "Best Women's Colleges" by BestCollege.com in 2023.
- First and only women's college with a U.S. Small Business Administration Women's Business Center on its campus.
- Faculty/student ratio of 7 to 1
- Robust global studies program – 225+ Belles have traveled globally to 30+ countries
- State-of-the-art TV and photography studios
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s only speech in Greensboro was in our Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel
- First Black woman president of a four-year U.S. college, Dr. Willa B. Player
- One of only two all-women's HBCUs in the U.S.
- VA Approved College
- A United Methodist Church-related institution

