



Office of the President

Dear Bentley Community,

In November, I announced that Donna Maria Blancero was planning to step down as provost and vice president for academic affairs at the end of this academic year. As some of you are aware, since January, Donna Maria has been taking time away from the office on medical leave. I have been in close contact with Donna Maria often over the past few weeks, and I know how desperately she wanted to return to the provost's office to see this semester through to the end. However, it has become clear that Donna Maria will be unable to return for the foreseeable future due to expected back surgery, and she has made the difficult decision to extend her leave of absence through the end of the academic year.

Though she will return to the faculty in 2023, we will miss Donna Maria's spirit and drive in leading the academic enterprise while she is on leave. I know and appreciate that Donna Maria came to this difficult decision with the best interests of the university in mind. Everything I shared about Donna Maria in my November announcement (below) remains true today. I am endlessly thankful for all she has done in her tenure as provost to help Bentley move closer to becoming the institution we *know* it can be.

To ensure our steady path forward and continued success, Rick Oches has graciously accepted my request that he step up from his role as dean of arts and sciences to serve as interim provost while the university's [search committee](#) continues its work to identify a new and permanent provost and vice president for academic affairs. Rick will join the Cabinet, representing academic affairs. While Rick leads the provost's office, Jane Griffin will also step up from her current role as associate dean of arts and sciences to become the interim dean of arts and sciences.

In addition to these changes, I also want to share an update on the dean of business. Bill Read has been on leave for the last few weeks and his return date is uncertain. In order to ensure we are able to move forward on our many important initiatives, [Sanjay Putrevu](#) has agreed to move his start date up to June 1, 2022. To help bridge the gap, I have asked Alina Chircu to serve as interim dean of business at this time, and she has agreed to take on this challenge. I am tremendously thankful to Alina, and to Bill, for working together to manage this transition.

All of these academic leadership changes are effective immediately.

I want to wish Donna Maria and Bill well and offer my sincerest thanks and gratitude for their leadership over the past few years. I also want to offer my thanks to Rick, Jane and Alina, as well as the associate provosts, Mystica Alexander and Cathy Carlson, who are coming together right now to keep the university moving forward. I am confident we are on the right path, and I look forward to working closely with this team in the months ahead.

Most Sincerely,

Brent Chrite

From: President E. LaBrent Chrite

Subject: Donna Maria Blancero Stepping Down as Provost

Date: November 16, 2021

Dear Bentley Community,

Earlier this month, Donna Maria Blancero informed me of her decision to step down as provost and vice president for academic affairs at the end of this academic year. This decision was not taken lightly, and I appreciate her thoughtful analysis of the needs of the university and of the timing of her decision, providing the university the opportunity to prepare for this transition in June 2022. I have offered Donna Maria my deep appreciation for the service she has provided to Bentley University over the course of her tenure in leadership, a sentiment I know

is shared by our broader university community. At the end of the academic year, Donna Maria will take a sabbatical before returning to the Bentley faculty in 2023.

Over the last two years, Donna Maria helped lead Bentley through one of the most intense periods of disruption and change in our university's 104-year history. These five "pandemic semesters"—spring '20, fall '20, spring '21, summer '21, fall '21—have brought exceptional challenges and demanding circumstances. Despite ever-changing public health conditions, government regulations and learning modalities, Bentley survived and even thrived during this period. We have now successfully returned to fully in-person teaching and learning, launched the university's next strategic positioning process, and implemented new classroom technologies, practices and pedagogies that have prepared Bentley for almost any obstacle 2022 may bring. Donna Maria's leadership and engagement of these efforts has been invaluable and for this I am most grateful to her.

Donna Maria has been a vital member of my executive leadership team. In my brief tenure, I have been grateful for her steadfast advocacy on behalf of our faculty and students, her energy and commitment, and her support of and many contributions to key initiatives. These initiatives include providing essential leadership on the university's multi-year, core curricular reform efforts, and simultaneously leading our pivot to a distributed learning platform at the onset of the pandemic. I cannot overstate Donna Maria's powerful and passionate advocacy for this institution's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, highlighted most recently by co-chairing the university's 2020 – 2021 Racial Justice Task Force. I also want to acknowledge her dedication to opening doors for the next generation of students for whom a college education may have seemed impossible to achieve. Donna Maria's efforts were essential in getting our FirstGen Presidential Fellows program off the ground, a key component of a broader academic affairs DEI strategy that Donna Maria established.

In the very near future, I will share plans for a search that will enable Bentley to find our next provost at this most critical time in the university's recent history. This search will be an inclusive process, with a committee comprised of a diverse and representative subset of the university's academic community. I look forward to working with you toward this end. I am cognizant that changes in leadership can be challenging for any organization, but I am committed to working with Donna Maria and the academic leadership team to ensure this transition at the end of the

academic year is seamless for our faculty, students, staff and extended university community.

In addition to the pressing work that members of academic leadership will see to completion in 2022, I will continue to rely on the engagement of every member of this community in the university's ongoing strategic positioning process, which will help us articulate an exciting new vision for Bentley in the decade ahead. We remain committed during this vital period of reimagination and transformation for Bentley, and that work will continue unabated. Uncovering and understanding new opportunities to serve our students and support our most critical stakeholders more effectively is the essential work that will expand our boundaries and help us become the university that our students, faculty, staff and alumni so richly deserve. I look forward to our collective success in this undertaking over the months to come.

While we will more formally celebrate Donna Maria's service to Bentley during the spring semester, please do join me in thanking her for her leadership to the university over the past few years. I know that we are all deeply appreciative of her dedication to this institution.

Most Sincerely,

Brent Chrite