On Campus

SIPA Dean John Coatsworth Appointed Provost

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John Coatsworth (Eileen Barroso)

John Coatsworth, who, according to President Lee C. Bollinger, was a “transformational dean” at the School of International and Public Affairs, has been named the University’s provost.

As provost, Coatsworth is the University’s chief academic officer, overseeing all faculty appointments and tenure decisions, as well as the development of the University’s annual academic budget.

“I am, personally, very pleased that John will serve in this vital University role and as my colleague,” said Bollinger in announcing the decision on February 17. “It is a gift to all of us, for John will bring his wonderful talents to bear on the work ahead.”

Coatsworth became interim provost last summer, when Claude Steele stepped down from the position to become dean of Stanford University’s School of Education. Coatsworth continued to serve as dean of SIPA, a position he had held since 2008, during his eight months as interim provost. Now that Coatsworth is no longer the dean of SIPA, Robert Lieberman, the school’s vice dean for academic affairs and a political-science professor, is filling the role on an interim basis.

At SIPA, Coatsworth oversaw the school’s transition into a self-governing unit of the University. The school was previously administered by the Division of Arts and Sciences; now it has the power to hire its own faculty and determine its own budget and student enrollment.

Coatsworth also led SIPA on a remarkable fundraising run: the school raised more than $10 million annually while he was dean, enabling it to increase its fellowship budget by 50 percent. Coatsworth, a scholar of Latin American economic and international history, came to Columbia from Harvard in 2006.

The provost’s office, in the first eight months under Coatsworth, has made progress on several major initiatives. It has created a Standing Tenure Committee, whose faculty members review all tenure applications to ensure that the final decisions are made in adherence to a consistent, University-wide standard. The provost’s office is also working with each of Columbia’s schools to strengthen their efforts to recruit a diverse faculty.

“When you consider the overall academic experience of our students, nothing is more important than the diversity of our faculty,” Coatsworth says. “We’ve made some good strides in hiring women and minorities in the past few years, but we need to do more.”

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