On Campus

Melissa Begg Named Dean of School of Social Work

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Melissa Begg. Photo: Roj Rodriguez

Melissa Begg, a Columbia population-health scientist and academic administrator, became dean of the School of Social Work on September 1.

She succeeds Irwin Garfinkel, who led the school on an interim basis after dean Jeanette Takamura stepped down in late 2016.

A professor of biostatistics, Begg specializes in analyzing data from sibling and family studies as a means of identifying early-life determinants of adult health problems. She has also done extensive research on how graduate-education programs are best developed and implemented. Born and raised in Queens, Begg studied mathematics at Fairfield University in Connecticut and earned a doctorate in biostatistics at the Harvard School of Public Health. She joined Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health in 1989.

Begg has held a number of senior leadership positions at Columbia. From 2006 to 2018, she was codirector of the Irving Institute for Clinical and Translational Research at Columbia University Irving Medical Center, where she promoted interschool collaborations and created infrastructure to support the career development of doctoral and postdoctoral students and junior faculty. From 2010 to 2014, she served as the Mailman School's vice dean for education, and for the past five years she served as Columbia's vice provost for academic programs, overseeing the University's accreditation process, the approval process for new educational programs, the execution of agreements with partner institutions, and the establishment of centers and institutes.

Begg says she wants to lead Columbia's School of Social Work in order to advance its 120-year-old tradition of "combining foundational research on social-welfare programs … with innovative education for effective social-work practice." She adds, "I am ready to apply my thirty years of experience to solidify and expand the school's track record in maximizing human potential, advancing social justice, and pursuing excellence in evidence-based social work."



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