

Kansas Regents Distinguished Professorship

Professor W. Bartley Hildreth was hired by Wichita State University as its sole Regents Distinguished Professor in 1994 and held that rank until he departed the university in 2009.

The Regents Distinguished Professors are the only faculty actually appointed by the Board of Regents. During his time in Kansas, there were two faculty members with that rank at Kansas State University and one at the University of Kansas. These were the premier professorships in the State of Kansas, with a state-wide mission.

The program started in Fiscal Year 1964 when the Kansas Legislature appropriated funds to the Board of Regents for the employment of outstanding professors as Regents Distinguished Professors. The purpose of the program is to attract to Kansas and to retain in Kansas established scholars whose research projects augment the State's economic and industrial development.

Presidents of the three Kansas research universities start the process by submitting a proposal detailing the area of academic specialization, its contribution to the economic development of the state, and other required characteristics. Once the position is approved, the university's chief executive office can submit a nominee for appointment to a Regents Distinguished Professorship.

The Chair of the Kansas Board of Regents appoint a Subcommittee composed of three Board members which is responsible for making recommendations to the Board in all matters pertaining to the funding, appointment, evaluation and continuance of Regents Distinguished Professors.

Professor Hildreth was interviewed by the Subcommittee of Board Members prior to his employment.

In the selection of Regents Distinguished Professors, emphasis is placed on the capabilities that will enhance the economic and industrial development of the State. Regents Distinguished Professors are to inform public policy and enhance the attractiveness of the State through their professional, social and cultural contributions.

A distinguishing feature of these professorships is that each university shall undertake a comprehensive performance evaluation in October of the fifth year of the Regents Distinguished Professor designation and every succeeding fifth year of the designation. The university's evaluation may include commentary on the professor's academic work provided by peer evaluators selected by the institution and comprised of educators in the professor's field who are not connected with the Kansas Regents system. The university's chief executive officer shall submit to the Subcommittee a report on this evaluation that includes evidence of contributions to the State's economic development, including sponsorship of research activity.