

# "I WANT TO BE HERE AS LONG AS I CAN HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT"

## New President Haynie hopes to bring stability to MSU

CECIL WITHERSPOON  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

New MSU President Stacy Haynie closed a loop that began more than three decades ago when she accepted the role of MSU president. Now, Haynie is back home – and she says she's here to stay. Her MSU journey began with an undergraduate degree in theater, followed by a master's in political science.

During her time at MSU, Haynie had a student job working in the president's office – typing letters, sending thank-you notes and general officework. Haynie's job in the president's office is very different today, but Haynie said her return is equal parts familiar and new.

"So it's very much coming home, but it is a new adventure, a very exciting one, and I feel in some ways, it was 33 years of getting the experience that I needed to be prepared for this," Haynie said.

Haynie spent those 33 years at LSU, working up to tenured professor, then all the way to vice president and provost, before settling back in as a full-time professor. She said she had recently finished a book and was planning to finish her career as an LSU professor before MSU reached out.

Haynie said she'd had other schools attempt to recruit her in the past, but that she wasn't interested. But when MSU called, she said it was different.

"And I had received a number of individuals saying, 'We want to talk to you about this position or that position,' in other universities and was absolutely not interested and had responded to absolutely none of them. And then I got that call," Haynie said. "And I said to my husband, 'The search firm from MSU called.' He said, 'Well, I think you're going to have to talk to them.' And then it was just very, very, very quickly after that."

As Haynie's first semester back at MSU unfolds, there are a number of challenges the institution faces.

One obstacle MSU has had



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE GARCIA | THE WICHITAN

**Stacy Haynie talks about her role in Hedda Gabler as a theater student at MSU.**

to navigate the past two years is instability in leadership. Since the departure of former President Suzanne Shipley, the school has seen turnover in deans, the provost's office and even at president. Haynie is the university's fifth president in six semesters.

Haynie said she's aware of the turnover, including former President JuliAnn Mazachek leaving after just one semester, but Haynie stressed that she wants to bring stability to her alma mater.

"I am here because of the

work that needs to be done at this institution. So this is it. I'm not going anywhere. And I want to be here as long as I can have a positive impact. So I will leave when that isn't the case. I'm not going anywhere," Haynie said.

Schools across the nation are facing enrollment declines, and MSU is no exception.

Haynie said the issue stems from a number of reasons, but that she'll work to ensure MSU is as desirable a destination as possible to combat those reasons.



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE GARCIA | THE WICHITAN

**Stacy Haynie checks out her yearbook entry from the year she graduated from MSU. Haynie is an area native, growing up in nearby Clay County.**

"There are just fewer students who are leaving high school ready for college. So that pool is shrinking right across the whole of the country," Haynie said, adding "And so there's an arms race for the ones who are there and I know that because we were coming after the students in Texas. But Texas is positioned, and I think MSU is positioned, to be successful because this is a regional institution with lots of breadth. And there are also international students."

Another hot topic in higher education, particularly in Texas, is the future of DEI practices at the university level.

Haynie said the school's priority will be staying in line with Texas state policies while making sure each student is included and has the opportunity to excel.

"Well, I think that the legislature wants to ensure that every student on a campus finds a place and a space where they can feel valued, and will be valued and again, can be successful. And I think there's nothing we're doing that is not in alignment with that," Haynie said. "So certainly the goal will be to ensure you know, in line with

whatever the state laws are, but I I don't see conflict with ensuring that every student on this campus is valued and finds their place and their space to be successful."

Haynie added that diversity is an important part of college and education.

"One of the best parts of college is that you get to meet people who don't look like you, who don't think like you, who open your world and help you to, you know, understand the world from a variety of different perspectives. That was the same when I was here, and it's the same now," Haynie said.

Haynie also stressed that listening to students, particularly student government, is something she values in decision-making.

"I have always been engaged with student government. That is the voice for those students in terms of a formal organized voice for the students. So certainly engaging with them. One of my first calls was to the student government president to just say, 'We're gonna need to be partners here,'" she said, later adding, "And so part of that is listening and trying to be really good partners with students."