

NEWS RELEASE

Rutgers-Newark School of Public Affairs and Administration Announces New Dean

Following an international search for the next leader of the School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA), Rutgers University – Newark Chancellor Nancy Cantor and Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Jeffrey Robinson announced that Dr. Kaifeng Yang will become the school’s dean effective January 1.

An extensively experienced academic leader who has fostered deep collaborations with local government, Yang is a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration who earned his doctorate from SPAA and is known internationally as a scholar of government performance management, citizen engagement, public human resource management, and digital governance.

“We’re thrilled to welcome Kaifeng as dean and welcome him back home to SPAA,” said Cantor. “Besides understanding the school and its strengths so thoroughly, he brings expansive experience as an academic leader who has successfully navigated the two-way streets of collaboration with public sector partners while building a remarkable record as an award-winning scholar and teacher both in the U.S. and in China. He is just the leader SPAA and Rutgers-Newark need to build on SPAA’s tremendous momentum.”

Robinson admires Yang’s style as someone who remains intellectually curious despite his own broad experience and international standing. “Even as someone who has led a school much larger than SPAA and having organized interdisciplinary academic programs and research collaboration, Kaifeng sees himself as always learning. He is always looking for better ways to do things, studying best practices, drawing on his many disciplinary connections around the world, and consulting with his colleagues at home to keep his ideas attuned to the ever-shifting needs of the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.”

“Rutgers has amazing faculty, staff, and students. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to serve this great institution and my alma mater. I look forward to working with the remarkable SPAA community to advance its vital missions,” Yang says.

Yang’s long and distinguished career as a scholar, teacher, and academic leader began upon earning his Ph.D. at Rutgers-Newark when he joined the faculty of Florida State University’s Askew School of Public Affairs and Policy. At Askew, he rose through the ranks, earning awards for teaching and research while gaining national and international recognition for his work at the intersection of the effectiveness of government and citizen involvement that embraces the breadth of research modes from theoretical to empirical and quantitative to qualitative. Ultimately, he served as director of the school’s Master of Public Administration (MPA) program and Ph.D. program, which is recognized among the top such programs in the U.S.

Subsequently, he was appointed Dean of the School of Public Administration and Policy at Renmin University in China, where he had earned master's and doctoral degrees in business administration before coming to Rutgers-Newark. In that post, he oversaw a school with more than 27 research centers, 90 faculty, 30 staff, and 2,000 students, increasing the size of the undergraduate and graduate student bodies while dramatically increasing research productivity. He proved to be a transformational leader, positioning the school's MPA program to become accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), the leading international accreditor in the field, and launching the program into the top ranks in Asia and internationally.

A dedicated and visionary institution builder, he also led national initiatives to expand the discipline in China, serving in leadership roles for the Chinese Ministry of Education's MPA Education Steering Committee to develop national guidelines for over 300 MPA programs, train faculty members, conduct quality inspections, and facilitate innovation while initiating a national accrediting program modeled on NASPAA.

As the SPAA and Rutgers-Newark communities prepare to welcome Yang in the new year, Cantor and Robinson asked the SPAA and Rutgers-Newark community to join them in expressing gratitude to Interim Dean Gregg Van Ryzin, who has stewarded the school since July 2022. "We can't thank Gregg enough for his sage and steady leadership. He brought to bear his previous experience as Interim Dean and his consummate collegiality, which enabled him to keep advancing SPAA's standing among the best schools of its kind in the nation."

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