

Harris Finds Her Match at St. Louis Community College

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When Zelema Harris interviewed for the post of interim chancellor of St. Louis Community College following the retirement of Chancellor Henry Shannon, "I became engaged," she said. "There was a match between my skills and what the college needed."

Harris, 67, began serving as interim chancellor in August, and in November was granted a three-year contract as chancellor. Robert Nelson, board president, said Harris brings the St. Louis Community College board "a real tough approach to the business of the community college."

"I think she's very fair," he said. "In leadership team meetings, she gives ample opportunity to give opinions on issues at hand. She's demanding of folks and expects a day's work, and she's getting it."

Harris, who grew up on a farm in east Texas, received her undergraduate degree from Prairie View A&M University, then received her master's degree and doctorate from the University of Kansas.

Harris had started a consulting firm following her retirement in mid-2006 after 16 years as president of Parkland College in Champaign, Ill. She previously had moved up the ranks at Metropolitan Community College system in Kansas City to become president of Penn Valley Community College.

The four-campus St. Louis Community College had operating revenue of more than \$148 million in fiscal 2007 and hosts about 25,000 credit students a semester. Harris said one of her greatest opportunities will be "to meet all those people who can and do influence the college... and to be more involved in fundraising." She also wants to boost the college's distance-learning offerings.

Harris walks to work at the Cosand Community College Center at 300 S. Broadway from her apartment downtown in Pointe 400 (the former Pet building). With three grown children and a granddaughter who visit from three other states, she said she finds St. Louis to be "far more children-friendly than any city I've ever lived in."