

New OAC Dean Named

Prof. Rene Van Acker has been appointed dean of the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) for a five-year term effective Sept. 1. The announcement was made today by Charlotte Yates, provost and vice-president (academic).

Van Acker is currently OAC's associate dean (external relations) and a professor in the Department of Plant Agriculture.

The decision follows an extensive international search by a hiring committee composed of faculty, students and staff, chaired by Yates.

Yates said the committee was impressed by Van Acker's dedication and commitment to OAC, especially his work as associate dean during a period of great change and fiscal challenges.

The committee concluded that Van Acker's experience and knowledge would help OAC achieve a new level of excellence in teaching, research and service, and continue to be a world leader in food and agriculture, she said.

"Food and agriculture are vitally important to both the economy and to society," Yates said.

"OAC's international reputation distinguishes U of G from other universities across Canada and beyond, and positions us to make a lasting difference to the future."

Yates added that Van Acker's experience in the agri-food sector, especially developing relationships and partnerships with government, industry, alumni and other stakeholders, was seen by the committee and the broader community as building blocks for success.

"Agriculture is a complex sector, and partnerships and collaborations will be a key part of OAC's future growth and vision," she said.

"I am pleased to welcome Rene to the leadership team."

Yates thanked members of the search committee and the University community for its input.

Van Acker, a U of G graduate, said he was "honoured" to be named dean.

“I am very excited to work with our excellent staff, faculty, students and partners to realize the opportunities we have to provide leadership for a vibrant and expanding food and agriculture sector,” he said.

A leading expert on weed management and biosafety, Van Acker has continued to teach and research while holding administrative positions. He chaired the Department of Plant Agriculture from 2006 to 2009.

Before joining U of G in 2006, he was an assistant professor in the Department of Plant Science at the University of Manitoba. He’s been an adjunct professor at Dalhousie University since 2014.

Van Acker holds a B.Sc. in crop science and a master’s degree in weed science from U of G, and a PhD in crop-weed ecology from the University of Reading in the United Kingdom.