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Contact: Bethany Daniels
(916) 739-7152

Pacific Announces John Kirlin as Founding Director of Public Policy Department

University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law has appointed experienced university leader and public policy executive John J. Kirlin as the law school’s Founding Director of the Department of Public Policy and as Distinguished Professor of Public Policy. Dr. Kirlin began his new role on July 1, 2015.

"John's record demonstrates his ability to develop the effective strategies needed to launch our new policy degrees," said McGeorge School of Law Dean Francis J. Mootz III. "He has a national reputation as a remarkable policy analyst and executive. I am excited to welcome him to Pacific McGeorge."

Dr. Kirlin is renowned for four decades of experience in policy analysis, administration and financing directed at complex public problems, especially in California. His expertise includes state-local fiscal relationships, regional governance, land use, and environmental and species protection policies. As an elected fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, Dr. Kirlin has served as an environmental policy advisor to the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

As the Founding Director of the Department of Public Policy, Dr. Kirlin will work to establish the Department within the law school and to build its programs. "We believe that having these prestigious policy degrees offered within the law school is unique, and will take full advantage of our location in the nation's most important state capital," Mootz commented.

The new policy degrees will offer opportunities for students to engage in high-level public policy work as part of their coursework. The Master of Public Policy (M.P.P.) program will launch in fall 2016 as a full-time day program, and the Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.) program will launch in fall 2017 as a part-time evening program to serve working professionals.

"In addition to offering the Master of Public Policy and Master of Public Administration degrees, the program faculty will research and engage with public policy processes," said Kirlin. "An important focus will be strengthening capacity of our region's leaders to make effective public policy decisions in a timely manner and then to capably implement decisions made." A first step will be a public forum this fall analyzing California experience with "extraordinary" public policy processes, such as the Federal Court Receiver for California Correctional Health Care Services and Delta Vision.

Rena Fraden, dean of the University's College of the Pacific, said "I look forward to working with Dr. Kirlin to
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establish pathways for the College’s undergraduate students to move into policy careers in the Capital, and for our faculty to teach in these exciting new programs.”

The McGeorge School of Law Department of Public Policy builds on the strengths of McGeorge’s Capital Center for Public Law & Policy, and the Eberhardt School of Business’s Center for Business and Policy Research. The Center for Business and Policy Research, which has informed public policy through its economic forecasts and other studies since 2004, opened an office on the Sacramento Campus earlier this year. The Pacific McGeorge Legislative and Public Policy Clinic is one way that students gain practical experience in researching, drafting, and pursuing adoption of California state legislative and regulatory changes. The Centers will provide opportunities for students to participate in rich multidisciplinary research and collaboration.

"The new Policy Studies degree will emphasize deep engagement of students with consequential public policy issues, consistent with the commitment to experiential learning that is the hallmark of the University and the law school," said Kirlin.

Water has been the focus of several significant policy initiatives led by Dr. Kirlin in recent years. He served as Executive Director of California’s Marine Life Protection Act Initiative (2005-07), launching a policy process which created Marine Protected Areas in California waters. He then served (2007-08) as Executive Director of Delta Vision, under a Governor's Executive Order, resulting in proposals for major changes to California's water, ecosystem and other policies, first in a "vision" (2007) and then in a strategic plan (2008), the foundation for a major legislative package enacted in 2009. Dr. Kirlin served as Executive Director of the Delta Vision Foundation (2008-2010), the mission of which is to keep the recommendations of the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force visible and relevant to policy makers, and is currently a member of its Board of Directors.

Dr. Kirlin brings 35 years of university experience to the position, having served as a faculty member and in administrative roles at the University of Southern California for nearly 30 years and at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis for five years. He was the founding editor of California Policy Choices (1984-94) and is author of dozens of articles, book chapters and monographs and books on fiscal limits and municipal services. Dr. Kirlin holds a bachelor's degree in government from University of Notre Dame and a Ph.D in political science from UCLA.

Media contacts

- Bethany Daniels | bdaniels@pacific.edu | 916.739.7152 office | 916.698.7203 mobile
- John J. Kirlin | jkirlin@pacific.edu

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