

Dewhurst named director of arts and cultural initiatives at MSU

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For Immediate Release

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Michigan State University Museum Director C. Kurt Dewhurst will take on a new role beginning July 1, joining the Office of University Outreach and Engagement as director of arts and cultural initiatives. In this new position, he will focus on strengthening connections between MSU and the arts-and-culture communities in mid-Michigan, statewide, and internationally.

“Arts and culture are an essential element in Michigan State University’s work to create prosperity for the common global good and to nurture a sense of humanity and hope for all,” said Hiram E. Fitzgerald, associate provost for University Outreach and Engagement. “Kurt’s commitment to collaboration, community engagement, and global connectivity provide great momentum and impact for the university’s efforts. He will be a terrific catalyst for additional collaborations, projects, and university-community endeavors in this exciting new role at Michigan State University.”



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Dewhurst, MSU Museum director since 1983, helped found the Museum's nationally known folklife research, collection development, and outreach programs. Under his direction, the MSU Museum became Michigan’s first Smithsonian Institution affiliate, creating shared research, collections, exhibitions, and educational programs. He chairs the university's Cultural Engagement Council, which works to increase awareness and participation in arts and cultural activities.

Dewhurst’s research interests include cultural change and continuity in folk arts, material culture, ethnicity, and occupational folk culture and he has curated over 50 research-based interpretive exhibitions and festival programs.

At Michigan State University, he has taught future museum professionals about curatorship, research, field work, exhibition development, and civic engagement.

Dewhurst recently co-authored the book *MSU Campus: Buildings, Places, Spaces* (with Linda O. Stanford), which traces the history and heritage of architecture and the campus park at MSU.

Dewhurst's work at MSU reflects a commitment to projects in partnership with underserved communities and cultural groups, responding to social and community needs. Dewhurst co-leads an MSU Study Abroad course, "Expressive Arts, Cultural Heritage, and Museum Studies in South Africa," and has served as a coordinator of a cultural heritage training program for emerging heritage workers in South Africa. Most recently, he co-curated the special exhibition, "Dear Mr. Mandela, Dear Mrs. Parks: Children's Letters, Global Lessons," which opened at the Nelson Mandela National Museum in Qunu, South Africa, for Mandela's 90th birthday in July 2008.

A leader at the national level in folk arts, civic engagement, and museum administration, Dewhurst serves as president of the board of the Fund for Folk Culture, in Santa Fe, N.M. He chairs the advisory committee of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and the board of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. In 2008 he was elected president of the American Folklore Society, the national organization of scholars, teachers, librarians, and cultural workers.

Dewhurst will continue at MSU as a curator of folk arts at the MSU Museum, and as a University Outreach and Engagement Campus Senior Fellow. A professor in the Department of English, Dewhurst will also continue to share his extensive knowledge and experience while teaching in the Museum Studies Program in the College of Arts and Letters.

A national search for a new MSU Museum director is currently under way.

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The Office of the Associate Provost for University Outreach and Engagement fosters MSU's land grant mission by connecting university knowledge with community knowledge in mutually beneficial ways. UOE provides resources to assist academic departments, centers and institutes, and MSU-Extension on priority issues of concern to society by encouraging, supporting, and collaborating with MSU faculty and academic staff to generate, apply, transmit, and preserve knowledge.