



MEDIA RELEASE

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New CEO Chosen for South Dakota Agricultural and Rural Leadership Foundation

The Board of Directors of the South Dakota Agricultural and Rural Leadership Foundation (SDARL) has selected Don Norton as CEO to head the organization. Norton will begin his responsibilities on Aug. 7, 2017.

Norton comes to SDARL after five years as president and CEO of the Illinois Agricultural Leadership Foundation. Prior to that, he was the educational program director there, developing the leadership curriculum for the organization. Don taught communication at Western Illinois University and held marketing communications managerial positions with many large corporations. He is also an award-winning broadcast journalist. He earned a Master of Arts Degree in Communication from Western Illinois University and holds a Certificate in Non-Profit Management from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. Norton is a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and the International Association of Programs for Agricultural Leadership.

"We're excited to have an experienced leadership professional taking the SDARL program into the future," said Nate Franzen, Chairman of the SDARL Board of Directors. "I encourage everyone in the South Dakota agricultural community to reach out and welcome Don and his wife, Kay, to our state."

SDARL was founded in 1999 under the direction of Dan Gee, Professor Emeritus in Animal Science at South Dakota State University. The first class in the 18-month leadership program started in 2000. Now conducting its 9th class, the organization has 243 alumni who have had a positive and profound effect on agriculture in South Dakota and the nation. In 2016, the SDARL Foundation and SDARL Alumni Association merged to guarantee the unity of stakeholders and create a common vision for the organization. Hiring a CEO is the last important step in this restructuring.

Norton will join SDARL Executive Director Lori Cope as staff members for the organization, whose mission is to identify and develop leaders for South Dakota's agricultural industry and rural community.

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