

CAMPUS

Mark Gearan to leave NY colleges for Harvard job

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Mark Gearan. Photo courtesy of Hobart and William Smith Colleges Telegram & Gazette

Gardner native Mark D. Gearan has held some influential jobs over the years, including directing the Peace Corps and serving as director of communications and deputy chief of staff for President Bill Clinton.

For the past 17 years he has served as president of Hobart and William Smith Colleges, a private liberal arts institution in Geneva, New York.

Mr. Gearan, 59, announced Wednesday that this will be his last year at the colleges. He has accepted an appointment for fall 2017 as president in residence at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education.

In that role, Mr. Gearan will work with students interested in higher education and will have a chance to think about issues facing the field, he said in a telephone interview.

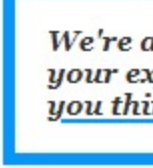
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It will also give Mr. Gearan time to ponder his next chapter.

"American higher education is the envy of the world," Mr. Gearan said. "But it's also the case, the question of cost and access ... continues to be a challenge" for both private and public institutions.

Another challenge is how to prepare students for rapidly changing careers and demands of this century.

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Mr. Gearan has focused on a range of big questions [during his tenure](#) as college president. The tag line for Hobart and William Smith is "Preparing students to lead lives of consequence," which Mr. Gearan sees as a mission.

"I think that's part of the public good that higher education does," he said.

Students are encouraged to explore what a life of consequence means for them.

Some of the community initiatives launched with Mr. Gearan's involvement include partnerships with the Geneva City School District to provide assistance in critical areas to children; establishing the Finger Lakes Institute, which promotes environmental research and education, and involving faculty in teaching inmates at Five Points Correctional Facility in Romulus, Seneca County.

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Mr. Gearan's first job after college was as a reporter for the Fitchburg Sentinel and Enterprise newspaper, a job he held for one year before going to work on Capitol Hill. The job left him with an appreciation of good journalism and its importance in civic life.

Even in partisan politics, he said, "You want to have a press that is skeptical."

The graduate of Gardner public schools, Harvard College and Georgetown University Law Center said, "Ultimately, I liked being engaged in these issues on the other side of the notebook."

Mr. Gearan said his decision to leave Hobart and William Smith after serving the longest of all past presidents comes at a time when he feels he has accomplished important things at the colleges and that fits nicely in his personal life.

His daughter Kathleen will graduate from Geneva High School in June. His older daughter, Madeleine, works on Capitol Hill.

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"It was not an easy decision to make," he said. "This is a place I love."

Mr. Gearan, his wife, Mary, and their daughters live on campus. He wrote in his letter to the college community and friends: "One of the many benefits of these 17 years has been those interactions with students - babysitting our daughters in the early years, sitting in our living room and talking with guest speakers, joining Mary's Friday Open House or simply playing with or walking our dogs, Dublin and Lhasa."

Mr. Gearan said that the community his family found in Geneva mirrored the supportive, hard-working community he knew in Gardner.

"That was really good preparation for me," he said. "I've always valued growing up in a place like Gardner."

According to information from the colleges, Thomas Bozzuto, chairman of the board of trustees and an alumnus, will contact faculty leadership and staff as well as fellow trustees to plan for a national search for a new president, empaneling a committee of trustees, faculty, staff and students to guide this task. The colleges will retain a professional search firm to ensure a broad and inclusive reach.

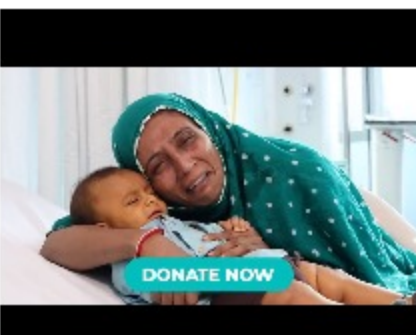
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"Finding someone to follow in Mark's footsteps will not be easy," Mr. Bozzuto said in a statement. "However, in light of the extraordinary achievements of the past two decades and the heightened recognition of the Colleges as a well-respected national liberal arts institution, I am confident that we will have a deep and talented pool of applicants. I am grateful to Mark for providing the board of trustees with ample time to ensure a thoughtful and well-planned national search and an orderly transition to the next president."

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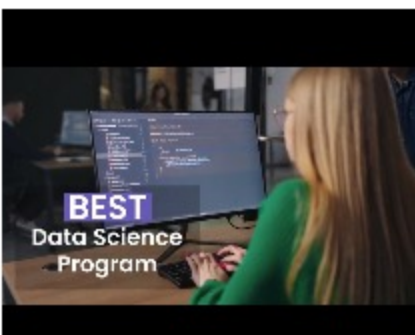
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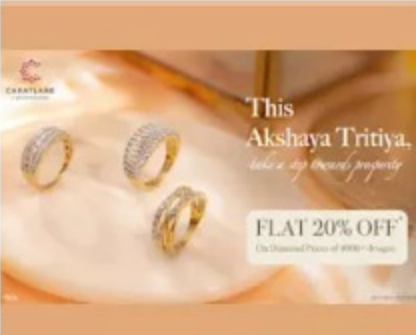
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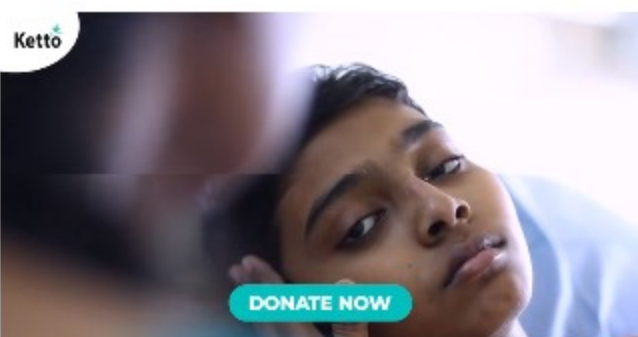


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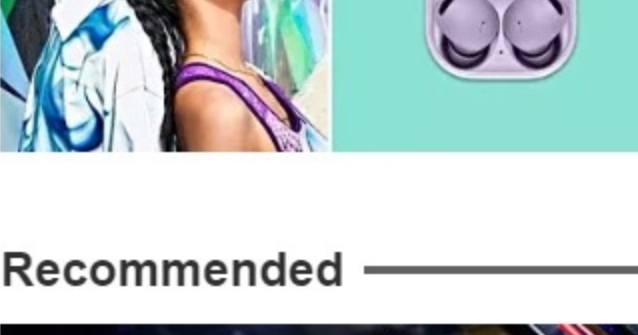
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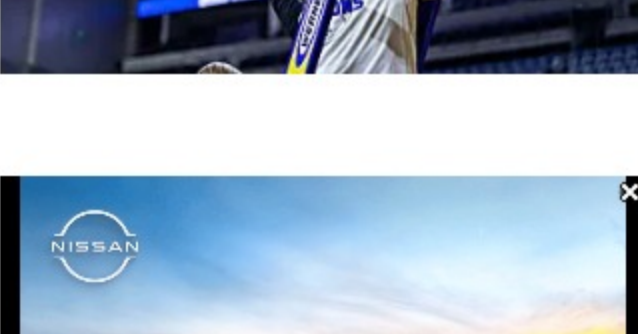


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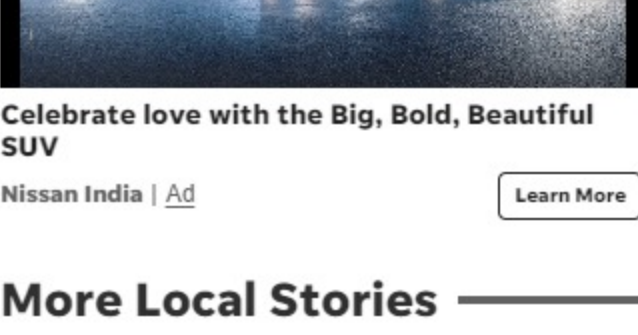
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