

# King steps down as president at The Woods

## She served the college 21 years in total, implemented transformational coed decision in 2015



**KING**

**BY DAVID KRONKE**  
TRIBUNE-STAR

In an emotional speech Thursday morning, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College President Dottie King announced that she would be resigning her position

to take a job leading the Independent Colleges of Indiana on Aug. 1.

"I will represent the Woods in a different way," she said. "The Woods just became the favorite school of the Independent Colleges of Indiana."

King has been at Saint Mary-of-the-

Woods for 21 years, 15 as president. She thanked a number of people, beginning with the Sisters of Providence, who brought her into the fold in 2002.

She choked up and paused for a few seconds before recalling the guidance that Sister Ellen Cunningham gave her.

After her speech, King reflected on the difficulty her decision to accept the ICI job entailed.

"I have been contemplating the decision for months," she said.

Turn to **KING, A4**



Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College President Dottie King displays a tissue that she would require while giving her speech announcing her resignation from the position.

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## King

Continued from A1

She said that the energy and time required to serve as a college president didn't allow her to spend much time with her grandchildren.

"It was extremely emotional, including over the weekend," King added. "It wasn't like once I made the decision, the emotion left. It feels like tearing myself away from something that I love."

One of King's largest accomplishments was transforming the college into a coed school in 2015. Since then, enrollment has expanded by 30%.

"That coed decision and other decisions were all part of my thought process, which is always, 'If it's not working, it's not working,'" she explained. "No matter what we did, we were not getting enough enrollment. I would look backward 40 years and see that better people than I had tried and it's not working, and I began my own study."

King added, "Nobody really knew I was doing that, but I was studying – what happened to other colleges, what made it work, where was it working, where was it not working, and when I became convinced, I led the board through a yearlong discussion."

Failure was not an option, she said.

"Once I become convinced, the fear of not [going coed was] greater than the fear of doing it," said King. "Once I become convinced, not doing it is accepting failure."

The decision was made to improve one aspect of

the school, but also contributed to others, as well.

"Clearly, we made that decision for financial reasons, but now, I believe it's providence's plan – men were always our next mission," King said. "I see the young men who are finding themselves here, and think this is the perfect place for them. ... I can see what we're doing to make them successful."

"That is no small achievement in this business," said King's colleague Brennan Randolph of the growth in enrollment. "Her leadership has been instrumental in achieving that."

Randolph was named interim president while a permanent replacement is sought. For eight years, he has been vice president of enrollment management and institutional technology.

King's decision "was both understandable and maybe shocking at the same time," Randolph said. "Big shoes to fill, for sure."

Board Chair Alice Shelton promised "an inclusive and transparent search process."

In her new job, King will retain her home in Terre Haute and travel to ICI's office in Indianapolis three days a week. She will also travel to the 29 private colleges ICI represents, from South Bend to Evansville.

She will still visit the campus and attend many athletic events to lend her voice in cheering on the Pomeroyes.

"I might even try to boss people around," King added with a laugh.

King was given a round of applause Thursday afternoon at the second annual County Update with the Vigo County Commissioners at the Terre Haute Convention Center.