Suelyn Scarnecchia, ’81, named U-M vice president/general counsel

Suelyn Scarnecchia, dean of the University of New Mexico Law School since 2003 and Michigan Law’s first associate dean for clinical affairs, has been named the new vice president and general counsel of the University of Michigan.

Her appointment, effective July 1, was recommended earlier this year by U-M President Mary Sue Coleman following a national search.

The eight-member search committee was chaired by Christina Whitman, ’74, the Francis A. Allen Collegiate Professor of Law and professor of Women’s Studies in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. Bruce Frier, the Henry King Ransom Professor of Law and the Frank O. Copley Collegiate Professor of Classics and Roman Law, and Robert B. Fisk Jr., ’55, HLD, ’97, a partner with Davis Polk and Wardwell in New York City and a member of Dean Evan H. Caminker’s Dean’s Advisory Council, also were members of the committee.

Scarnecchia was a clinical professor of law and associate dean of the University of Michigan Law School from 1987-2002, and special assistant to the U-M provost in 2002.

“We’re extremely happy to have Suelyn return to the University and Ann Arbor,” said Dean Evan H. Caminker. “She was instrumental in strengthening and expanding Michigan Law’s clinical law teaching program while she was on the faculty here, and we know that her experience and competence will be reflected in the performance of her new duties.”

“We are delighted to be welcoming back to Michigan a superb administrator, a creative problem solver, and an effective consensus builder,” said Coleman, who noted that “Scarnecchia’s outstanding combination of skills and experience made her the clear choice of the search committee.”

As vice president and general counsel, Scarnecchia will be responsible for the University’s legal affairs, will set strategic direction, serve as senior legal counsel to the Board of Regents, University administration and University units, supervise the professional legal staff, and manage relationships with outside counsel.

“I am honored to have this opportunity to, once again, serve the University of Michigan,” Scarnecchia said.

“Collaboration with terrific colleagues and students in New Mexico has only strengthened my desire to dedicate my energies to the many fascinating issues facing higher education. I look forward to the new challenges of this position and to returning home to Ann Arbor.”

Suelyn Scarnecchia, ’81

Scarnecchia joined the University of Michigan Law School’s Child Advocacy Law Clinic in 1987, and for the next 15 years supervised law students whose work in the clinic put them in the real world role of representing clients. She oversaw students’ training and supervised their written legal briefs and their appearances in court, and she appeared herself in court when necessary. In that capacity she handled the high profile “Baby Jessica” case about a contested adoption that raised profound questions about the rights of children and parents.

Prior to joining the U-M faculty, Scarnecchia practiced employment law at the Battle Creek firm of McCrosky, Feldman, Cochrane & Brock.

An Ann Arbor native, Scarnecchia earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Northwestern University in 1978.

Scarnecchia replaces Marvin Krislov, who frequently taught at Michigan Law while U-M general counsel. Krislov left to become president of Oberlin College.