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WEDC announces deputy secretary and chief operating officer *Current deputy secretary is taking senior position with JP Cullen*

MADISON, WI. NOV. 8, 2019 – Sam Ridders has joined the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) as deputy secretary and chief operating officer (COO), the organization’s secretary and CEO, Missy Hughes, announced today.

Ridders, who is currently strategic economic initiatives director at the Department of Administration (DOA), will succeed Tricia Braun on Nov. 15. Braun is leaving WEDC to join Wisconsin-based JP Cullen, where she was recruited as a strategic hire to work primarily with the commercial contractor’s industrial client portfolio.

“In his role at DOA, Sam has already built an excellent relationship with WEDC and its staff,” Hughes said. “While it’s impossible to duplicate Tricia’s experience and knowledge, Sam’s deep understanding of economic development, and especially his experience in rural development, will allow him to build on WEDC’s many successes.”

At DOA, Ridders’ duties include serving as a liaison between the State of Wisconsin and Foxconn Technology Corp. He has been closely involved in monitoring progress in the Wisconsin Valley Technology Center development in Racine County, as well as related projects undertaken by Foxconn’s affiliates.

Ridders has an extensive background in rural development, both in the U.S. and internationally. He served in the White House from 2013 to 2014 as director on the energy and environment team in the Presidential Personnel Office, then was administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Business-Cooperative Service. Before returning to Wisconsin in 2017, he launched and led the Rural Opportunity Initiative of the Georgetown University McDonough School of Business.

In Wisconsin, he served as executive director of Tiny Earth, a global initiative based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, harnessing the research of undergraduate students to discover new antibiotics.

A native of Stoughton, Ridders holds a juris doctor degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School, a master’s degree in international affairs from Columbia University, and a bachelor’s degree in political science and philosophy from Macalester College. He also served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia.

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“In my previous work at DOA, I have always been impressed by the professionalism and dedication of WEDC’s great staff,” Rikkers said. “I’m honored Secretary Hughes has asked me to join the team as we build on the great work WEDC has already done.”

Hughes said, “WEDC has been fortunate to have Tricia Braun as COO for the past four and a half years, and I am personally grateful to her for everything she has done to welcome and assist me since I came on board Oct. 1. I want to thank her for working with Sam to ensure the most seamless transition possible.”

Braun added, “My departure from WEDC is incredibly bittersweet as I am very proud to have been part of this talented, dedicated group of professionals. However, having had the chance to work with Secretary Hughes and now with incoming Deputy Secretary Rikkers, I have great confidence the team and the future of WEDC are in good hands.”

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About the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) leads economic development efforts for the state by advancing and maximizing opportunities in Wisconsin for businesses, communities and people to thrive in a globally competitive environment. Working with more than 600 regional and local partners, WEDC develops and delivers solutions representative of a highly responsive and coordinated economic development network. Visit wedc.org or follow WEDC on Twitter @WEDCNews to learn more.

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