

Dow employee to head CMU Research Corp.

By NICK PERSONS
for the Daily News

Ken Van Der Wende has spent the last 32 years at The Dow Chemical Co.

But he will take his services to Central Michigan University on April 1, as he assumes the role of president and chief executive officer of CMU's Research Corporation.

"I've always had a focus on young people and mentoring," Van Der Wende said. "This gives me an opportunity to continue to work with younger people while also seeing the state of Michigan, in

particular our region, do better in job creation."

Van Der Wende has been the global commercial director of Indirect Sales at Dow since 2004. The company, not CMU, will pay his salary as a "loaned executive," but he will spend all of his time at CMU. He said Dow is hoping his achievements help improve the regional economy, thus benefitting the company.

As head of the not-for-profit corporation, he will be primarily responsible for coordinating innovative research in scientific fields.

"You've got a lot of opportunities to leverage student ideas or scientific ideas that might come

out of the chemistry department," Van Der Wende said.

The previous president and CEO was Nathan Long, who resigned from the post in December. University director of Federal Programs Toby Roth has been filling in for him the last few months.

Van Der Wende said his specific interests include alternative energy, nanotechnology and water conservation, among others.

"This would be newer for CMU, but we may

(See "CMU-RC," page A2)

CMU-RC: hires local CEO

(Continued from A1)

also look toward a technology platform looking toward robotics," he said.

But the position requires more than strictly scientific research. It also involves building connections with technological companies, something at which Van Der Wende, given his impressive commerce résumé, should excel.

"We try to build bridges to other counties to make sure, as a region, we're attracting and growing more businesses," he said. "We hope we attract an increased number of technical and manufacturing companies."

Vice provost of research Janine Janosky said the corporation, which has been operating for about five years, was searching for someone with extensive experience in both the industrial and science fields.

"We were looking for an independent thinker who could move the Research Corporation forward in the academic community as well as the business community," she said.

Van Der Wende has plenty of experience in marketing,

finance and sales, but he doesn't have much familiarity with academic administration. But Janosky said she thinks he will do fine in that role.

"He was our top candidate," she said. "He comes with a wealth of experience both in the public sector and the private sector."

During his time at CMU, Van Der Wende will still report to Heinz Haller, Dow's executive vice president of Performance Plastics & Chemicals, while also giving an account to University President Michael Rao.

"We are looking forward to having someone with Ken's depth, experience and capability to lead our pursuit of innovative, industry-driven, applied research opportunities," Rao said in a statement from the university.

Van Der Wende has been nominated three times for Dow's Genesis award, a worldwide distinction that honors leaders and mentors for their roles in communities.

"I'm excited because I've got a great interest in continuing to develop young talent," he said.