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McCarthy Appointed as Director of Walter Orr Roberts Institute

John McCarthy, a leader in developing weather warning systems for aviation, has been appointed a vice president of UCAR in Boulder, Colorado, and director of the Walter Orr Roberts Institute, announced UCAR president Richard Anthes. McCarthy will assume the post on April 1, succeeding the institute's initial director, Radford Byerly, who served during the latter half of 1993, and current interim director Harriet Barker.

Founded shortly after the death of Roberts, NCAR's visionary founder, the institute is designed to further the application of atmospheric and related science in the service of society and to help translate the goals and products of that research for policymakers, students, and the public. As a UCAR vice president, McCarthy also will oversee the Corporate Affiliates Program, the Office of Government Affairs, and other UCAR activities related to corporate and government interaction.

As director of the institute, McCarthy will be addressing outreach and advocacy on weather and climate issues that have the potential to significantly alter life on the planet, from severe storms—such as hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards, and flooding rains—to ozone depletion, pollution, global warming, and other aspects of global change. The institute will establish focused programs in education and outreach, applied research, and technology transfer to address the needs of the public, including students of all ages, decision-makers and policymakers at all levels of government, and the private sector worldwide.

Some of McCarthy's specific goals for the institute include

- Building a small permanent staff, to be supplemented by prominent visiting researchers.
- Pursuing opportunities in the private sector.
- Demonstrating societal benefits of mesoscale weather forecasting and warnings and assessing the costs and benefits of the U.S. Weather Research Program (USWRP), in collaboration with entities such as NCAR's Environmental and Societal Impacts Group. The USWRP is drawing renewed interest among researchers and the federal government.
- Developing international opportunities, particularly in Asia, where McCarthy recently spent four months on sabbatical.

McCarthy has directed NCAR's Research Application Program (RAP) since its inception. RAP conducts research on weather that affects aircraft safety. This research is sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF) through an Interagency Agreement in response to requirements and funding by the Federal Aviation Administration's Aviation Weather Development Program. NSF sponsors NCAR.

From 1981 to 1985, he directed the Joint Airport Weather Studies and the Classify, Locate, and Avoid Wind Shear projects, whose discoveries on wind shear and related phenomena led to the creation of RAP to devise and implement detection and warning systems for airports. McCarthy received a bachelor's degree in physics from Grinnell College and a master's degree in meteorology from the University of Oklahoma (OU) before completing his doctorate at the University of Chicago in 1973. He taught at OU from 1973 to 1980.