

Rebecca M. Blank
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Blank's experience blends a knowledge of economics with a history of leading through innovation, and a background as an educator and researcher.

Leading Wisconsin's flagship university represents a return to academia for Blank. From 2009 to 2013, she served in top positions at the U.S. Department of Commerce. She started as under secretary for economic affairs, and then was named deputy secretary and acting secretary of the agency, managing nearly 45,000 employees and a \$10 billion budget. During her time at the agency, Blank not only led a large and complex organization, but also worked to promote economic development with an emphasis on connecting research and innovation with job creation and economic growth.

Blank served as dean and professor of public policy and economics in the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan from 1999 to 2008. In her role as dean, she launched such innovations as interdisciplinary graduate programs and an undergraduate public policy major. Before joining the Department of Commerce, she was a fellow at the Brookings Institution, a nonprofit public policy research think tank in Washington, D.C.

Earlier in her career, she was a member of the faculty at Northwestern University and Princeton University, as well as an assistant visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She also spent two years, from 1997 to 1999, as a member of the President's Council of Economic Advisers.

Blank was born in Missouri and later moved to Minnesota. She earned an undergraduate degree in economics from the University of Minnesota, and a doctoral degree in economics from MIT.