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# Donald J. Farish Appointed 10th President of Roger Williams University

New chief executive joins RWU after 13 years of transformative leadership as president of Rowan University in New Jersey



March 29, 2011

**BRISTOL, R.I.** – The Roger Williams University Board of Trustees has named esteemed educator, scientist and attorney Donald J. Farish, Ph.D., its 10<sup>th</sup> president. Chairman Richard L. Bready announced the selection of Dr. Farish to University students, faculty and staff at a campus event in Bristol this afternoon.

Dr. Farish concludes a 13-year term as president of Rowan University in Glassboro, N.J., this semester and will take office at RWU on July 1, 2011; he succeeds Ronald O. Champagne, Ph.D, who has served as interim president at Roger Williams since August 2010.

“Even among a pool of standout candidates, Dr. Farish distinguished himself with his easy, earnest, thoughtful and clearly confident approach to the Search Committee’s thorough query of his leadership characteristics,” Chairman Bready says. “A consensus quickly emerged – not just on the Search Committee but among the students, faculty and staff who added input after his recent campus visit. Dr. Farish will undoubtedly bring the vision and the commitment to academic excellence needed to build on the strong foundation at Roger Williams and propel the University to even greater progress in the years to come.”

A lifelong educator with more than 40 years of experience in higher education including 11 as a full-time faculty member, Dr. Farish earned a Ph.D. in biology from Harvard University in 1970 and later a *juris doctor* from the University of Missouri in 1976. After early appointments at the University of Missouri and the University of Rhode Island, he progressed to Sonoma State University in California, serving as dean of the School of Natural Sciences from 1983 to 1990, and provost and academic vice president from 1990 to 1998.

In 1998, Dr. Farish took the presidential post at Rowan, where he guided the university through an aggressive improvement plan and transformed a well-regarded regional institution into a world-class university with a reputation for excellence and innovation. Today, Rowan stands as the third-ranked master's level public institution in the North, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

In joining Roger Williams University, Dr. Farish takes the reins at an institution that has seen a similar transformation over the last two decades and is poised for even greater gains ahead.

"Even before I set foot on campus, I felt very much in sync with the values to which Roger Williams University is committed – diversity and civil discourse, service to the community, a student-centered approach and a high-quality educational product," Dr. Farish says. "RWU embodies everything I've stood for and worked for my entire career. To be invited to lead this campus is a singular honor and truly a privilege."

Originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, Dr. Farish immigrated to the United States after earning his bachelor's degree in zoology from the University of British Columbia; in 1966, he completed a master of science in entomology at North Carolina State University before heading to Harvard for his doctoral studies.

While serving as a full-time faculty member in biology at the University of Missouri, Dr. Farish enrolled at the university's School of Law and completed his J.D. in 1976. His legal training proved particularly valuable as he advanced into higher education administration; one of the many factors that makes Roger Williams a good fit, he says, is the emergence of RWU Law as a significant player among New England's law schools.

With the transformation of Rowan during his tenure, Dr. Farish has become a sought-after voice on higher education issues; in July 2010, he served as one of 20 sitting presidents and chancellors at a Presidential Roundtable organized in Washington, D.C., by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education to discuss the future of higher education in the U.S.

In addition to his leadership as an administrator, Dr. Farish is also an accomplished scientist. He has published six biology textbooks and authored and co-authored a variety of articles on entomology and animal behavior.

Accompanying Dr. Farish in Bristol will be his wife, Maia, who at Rowan served in a volunteer capacity as liaison for university affairs. The Farishes will relocate from the Rowan University president's home in Woodbury, N.J., to the Roger Williams University residence on Ferry Road in Bristol.

The appointment of Dr. Farish concludes a presidential search initiated in September 2010 and conducted by a search committee comprising a representative group of Trustees, alumni, administrators and members of the faculty and student body at Roger Williams. University Trustees Gary R. Chapman and Denise M. Jenkins chaired the committee, partnering with higher education search firm Academic Search, Inc. along the way.

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