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## Newsroom: RWU Law Expands Providence Presence

Roger Williams University School of Law

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# NEWSROOM

## RWU Law Expands Providence Presence

As part of a University expansion in the capital city, RWU Law will enlarge clinical and experiential opportunities for students, enhance community outreach.



**BRISTOL, R.I., Dec. 19, 2014** – In a move that will

profoundly amplify the presence of **Roger Williams University School of Law in downtown Providence** and provide law students with enhanced access to hands-on, experiential opportunities in the capital city, Roger Williams University has agreed to lease 76,566 square feet of space at One Empire Plaza from property owner Berkeley Investments, Inc.

**RWU Law Dean Michael J. Yelnosky** joined **RWU President Donald J. Farish**, **Providence Mayor Angel Taveras** and Berkeley Investments Vice President and Project Manager Barbara Smith-Bacon and other city, state and community officials – including RWU Law professor and **mayor-elect of Providence Jorge O. Elorza** – for an event today at One Empire Plaza to announce the University's expansion in Providence.

When **the new space opens in May 2016**, following a complete renovation, it will replace the University's existing Metro Center at 150 Washington Street, enabling RWU Law to further enhance its outstanding experiential learning opportunities in the very hub of the state's legal culture. With its close proximity to the court houses, government offices, community service organizations and private law firms, the site will help the law school fulfill its explicit guarantee that every qualified student is afforded a substantial clinical experience, gaining the practical, skill-building opportunities needed to graduate job-ready and prepared to thrive in their early careers.

"We will be able to provide students with even more value with a 'home' in Providence where they can engage in both experiential and classroom work – to see that they are not separate but feed and

complement each other,” said Dean Yelnosky. “A law center in the city will also give us an opportunity to take advantage of our relationships with the legal community, forge other relationships, and more easily and effectively collaborate with our partners. Providence is the hub of the legal, business, and cultural communities in Rhode Island. Our new home will permit us and our students to be part of that.”

Occupying the entire fourth floor and maintaining a significant presence throughout the building, the RWU Law space will serve as the school's law center for Providence, more fully integrating its clinical offerings and manifesting its connection to the city and state's legal community. The Providence law campus will house the school's Criminal Defense, Immigration, and Community Economic Development Clinics, as well as providing additional classrooms and a large, flexible space that can be used as a mock courtroom, suitable for trial practice instruction and even use by state and federal court judges.

The classrooms will serve law students spending more time away from the Bristol campus, whether working in one of the clinics or in a clinical externship in judges' chambers, government offices, other public interest settings, or the legal departments of major corporations located in and around Providence. There will also be a branch office of the school's Feinstein Center for Pro Bono and Experiential Education, which is home to the nationally recognized Pro Bono Collaborative, which partners law firms, law students, and community-based organizations to provide targeted pro bono legal services.

The Empire Plaza location will also provide expanded space for RWU's School of Continuing Studies and its growing array of outreach and engagement programs, including the Latino Policy Institute, HousingWorks RI and the Community Partnerships Center. With community-focused, project-based learning having emerged as a defining element of an RWU education, Farish says a larger, more geographically central presence in the heart of the state and city is essential.

“This puts students at the center of the action and will translate to more real-world opportunities, which equip graduates with the practical skills that open doors in the employment world,” Farish said. “And for our community partners – the state of Rhode Island, the city of Providence and a great number of other municipalities and nonprofits in the region – this allows us to collaborate and to contribute faculty and student expertise on a greater scale, from a central location, on quality-of-life issues that affect Rhode Islanders.”

The move serves as a long-term investment by the University in the city of Providence, its surrounding communities and local businesses and residents. With a 12-year lease beginning in May 2016, rent will total nearly \$23 million dollars into 2028; that follows a renovation by Berkeley Investments that will total nearly \$11 million before RWU takes occupancy. With much of the building's activity to continue late into

the evening, the expanded student presence will also benefit local businesses well beyond busy daytime commuter hours.

"We are excited to have Roger Williams University expand its presence here in Providence and welcome RWU students, faculty and staff as they breathe new life into One Empire Plaza," Mayor Taveras said.

"This expansion will benefit local businesses, bringing more people downtown and showing them what our city has to offer. Furthermore, RWU's increased presence downtown and its proximity to surrounding communities will provide more students with the opportunity to gain the practical skills and knowledge so valuable to rounding out their educational experience."

Berkeley Investments President Young K. Park noted the significance of the agreement with RWU: "With this long-term lease, Roger Williams University is the perfect partner for us at One Empire Plaza," he said.

"We are delighted that RWU selected One Empire for its growing array of law, continuing studies and graduate programs, and we look forward to a long and successful relationship with the University."