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Public Affairs, Roger Williams University

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University Implements Revolutionary New Core Purpose and Values

Rhode Island to benefit from experienced graduates and workforce development

September 17, 2015 | Public Affairs Staff

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Roger Williams University President Donald J. Farish was joined today by Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo and Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza, along with students and faculty, to announce bold goals designed to make a significant and meaningful difference in Rhode Island’s future.

As part of an ambitious initiative named Roger’s Revolution, the University is formally adopting a revolutionary higher education philosophy driven by a core purpose – To Strengthen Society through Engaged Teaching and Learning – and a singular goal – To Build the University the World Needs Now.

In Rhode Island, the implementation of this initiative over the next three years is expected to:

- Provide 100% of our graduates – 2,500 over three years – with vitally important marketplace experience;

- Generate 2,100 skilled, job-ready workers through our School of Continuing Studies;
• Develop hundreds of new partnerships with businesses and community groups;

• Open a vital new Providence campus – a $10 million investment that builds on the University’s strategic commitment to students and the community in the state’s urban core.

“This revolutionary new approach to higher education combines traditional high-quality classroom-based teaching with intensive experiential learning,” Farish said. “On a parallel track, our innovative adult education initiatives will be dramatically expanded with a genuine sense of urgency to help thousands of Rhode Islanders develop skills they need to succeed in today’s workforce.”

Noting that both Governor Raimondo and Mayor Elorza have specific goals for workforce development and for encouraging college graduates to work and live in Rhode Island, Farish added: “Our public leaders have issued a call to action, and with Roger’s Revolution we are answering with tangible goals and a force of more than 6,000 students, faculty and staff. We are committed. We are ready. We know we can be part of the solution.”

“Key elements of Rhode Island’s economic recovery are workforce development – aligning training efforts with the needs of employers – and partnering with our higher education institutions to encourage graduates to stay in Rhode Island,” said Governor Gina Raimondo. “Roger Williams University is building the skills for a 21st century economy by recognizing these needs and stepping up with a sense of urgency, energy and commitment and making a real difference.”

“This proactive approach towards improving higher education in Rhode Island is the first step towards engaging and retaining the workforce of the future,” said Mayor Jorge O. Elorza. “Roger Williams University is setting an example by strengthening their existing programming to ensure their students are ready to succeed.”

Roger’s Revolution will include a series of metrics and milestones as well as public accountability that will keep the University and public focused on developing new partnerships and meeting the ambitious objectives. Already, four crucial areas of focus have been identified, and three-year goals are in place to support the University’s new core purpose.

Community Engagement and Experiential Learning – Rhode Island needs educated, skilled employees who will remain in the state, drive economic development and comprise the state’s future workforce.

• The 3-year goals: 100% of University students will be able to complete at least one experiential education project. Over 2,000 undergraduates will participate in community projects with nonprofits and government entities. Teams from the University’s new Business Partnerships Center, the Small Business Institute as well as the Business Start-up Clinic at RWU Law will work with more than 1,000 small and minority-owned businesses.
**Workforce Development** – There is a tremendous amount of talent already in Rhode Island that simply needs to be harnessed. People need meaningful pathways to workforce development opportunities, certificates and degrees that lead to long-term employment and career advancement. The University’s School of Continuing Studies has been creating flexible skill- and knowledge-based transformational educational experiences – working with business partners – to offer functional and meaningful programs that match unemployed, under-skilled and hard-to-employ residents with appropriate industries and employers. With the upcoming move to One Empire Plaza, the University will up the ante.

- **The 3-year goals:** Making 2,100 adults workforce ready through the Roger Williams University School of Continuing Studies.

**Promoting Economic and Environmental Sustainability** – Narragansett Bay and its associated waterways should be a natural resource accessible to every Rhode Islander, whether for recreation, education or occupation. The environmentally sustainable development of marine and maritime industries means more jobs and a healthier state economy. Roger Williams University operates the state’s only shellfish hatchery. It is providing practical skills for shellfish farmers, conducting research on the state’s Combined Sewer Overflow abatement system and restoring populations of oysters and other shellfish.

- **The 3-year goals:** Develop a two-acre experimental aquaculture farm in Mount Hope Bay. Develop disease-resistant strains of oysters and other aquatic animals. Create a new undergraduate major in Aquaculture and Aquarium Science. Expand the Marine Affairs Institute at RWU Law to include a staff attorney and additional projects for the Sea Grant Law Fellows.

**Public Interest Law** – Pro bono legal assistance is critical in addressing the unmet need for affordable legal services in Rhode Island, particularly among the state’s most vulnerable individuals, families and communities. Embedding future attorneys in the greater community who have experience providing services to this population will increase the number of lawyers committed to providing those services and increases opportunities for graduates to stay in Rhode Island. Roger Williams University School of Law already provides free legal services to clients in Rhode Island through its Business Start-Up Clinic, Criminal Defense Clinic, Immigration Clinic as well as the Pro Bono Collaborative.

- **The 3-year goals:** Increase the number of clinics and externship programs and grow the number of Pro Bono Collaborative projects to expand on RWU Law’s guarantee that every qualified student can complete a substantial experiential learning opportunity. Further embed law students in the legal, business and cultural communities in Rhode Island with the opening of the Providence campus.

“Expect to hear much more about these ongoing initiatives and others that are developing,” Farish said. “We’ve put the stake in the ground, and we now invite others to join with us in the revolution.”
Roger's Revolution Announcement 9.17.15