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Roger Williams University

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February 13, 2019

Law School News

Roger Williams University Announces 11th President

President-Designate Ioannis Miaoulis transformed Museum of Science, Boston, and Tufts School of Engineering; will "help RWU continue to redefine the role of higher education and chart an inspirational and strategic course for future growth"



President-Designate Ioannis (Yannis) Miaoulis. Image Credit: Roger Williams University

February 13, 2019

Ed Fitzpatrick

Bristol, R.I., Feb. 13, 2019 – The Roger Williams University Board of Trustees on Wednesday announced that Ioannis (Yannis) Miaoulis, who transformed the Museum of Science, Boston into an institution of national and international prominence, will become RWU's new president, beginning in August.

RWU Law Dean Michael J. Yelnosky is enthusiastic about the choice.

"I was impressed with and excited about the array of professional and personal skills Miaoulis displayed during the search process," Yelnosky said. "He is smart, he is curious, he is a seasoned

administrator, he believes in the transformative power of education, and he has a sparkle in his eye that hints at a joie de vivre. I am excited about working for and learning from a person with the kinds of leadership skills Miaoulis possesses.”

During his career, Ioannis (YAH-nis) Miaoulis (Me-OW-lis) has led large-scale efforts to spark passion for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) among young learners around the world. He is assuming the RWU presidency as it is completing a new \$13.8-million laboratories building for the School of Engineering, Computing and Construction Management. And he is arriving at an exciting time of transition at RWU, which just named Tim Baxter, a 1983 RWU graduate and current President and CEO of Samsung Electronics North America, as Board of Trustees chair in October.

At the Museum of Science, Miaoulis spearheaded the creation of the National Center for Technological Literacy, which developed K-12 engineering materials that have reached an estimated 200,000 teachers and 18 million students in 50 states and many countries. During his tenure, the museum’s budget doubled and he helped it raise more than \$470 million, including a record \$50 million gift from former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

At age 32, Miaoulis became the youngest-ever dean of what was then the College of Engineering at Tufts University. Working with the faculty, he led the effort to make it a separate School of Engineering. During his tenure as dean, the number of engineering student applications doubled and the number of female undergraduates increased by 30 percent.

Additionally, he significantly increased faculty and student diversity, boosting the proportion of female faculty members from 1 percent to 25 percent. He initiated the first internship program and an entrepreneurial leadership minor at Tufts, reflecting his passion for experiential learning, which is central to RWU’s mission.

Miaoulis will become RWU’s 11th President, succeeding President Donald J. Farish, who died in July 2018. Andy Workman now serves as RWU’s Interim President.

Baxter, co-chair of RWU’s Presidential Search Committee, said, “Ioannis Miaoulis possesses the perfect blend of experience, gained at a top-flight educational institution, and entrepreneurial spirit, which he exhibited at the Museum of Science, Boston. In a rapidly changing higher education environment, that deep knowledge will help RWU build on its established strengths on the Bristol campus and at Rhode Island’s only law school. And his strategic know-how will help RWU to continue developing the innovative programs and workforce training that make University College so vital to the community.”

RWU Trustee Marcia Morris, co-chair of the Presidential Search Committee, said, “President-Designate Miaoulis will be an asset not just for RWU but for all of Rhode Island. He will be a powerful advocate for building on the tremendous array of STEM-related programs at RWU. He is also a big believer in the importance of critical thinking and the role that the liberal arts plays in educating all students. He is a transformative leader with an innate understanding of how to make educational endeavors relevant and fun.”

At Tufts, for example, Miaoulis drew on his love of fishing and cooking – teaching a fluid mechanics class at Tufts from the fish’s point of view and a Gourmet Engineering class in which students cooked in a test kitchen, explored heat transfer and ate their experiments.

Miaoulis said, “RWU has all the ingredients to become a national model for transforming higher education. This University is prepared to build on its proud traditions and set itself apart from the crowd, propelled by its unique mix of liberal arts and professional programs, its top-notch faculty and its hub of innovation in Providence. Distinguished by its commitment to experiential education and community engagement, RWU is ready to prepare all learners to excel in a rapidly changing world – and to tackle the problems that matter most to society.”

“Yannis was a very effective, imaginative and energetic Dean of Engineering at Tufts,” said Harvard University President Lawrence S. Bacow, the former President of Tufts. “His enthusiasm for both teaching and research was infectious. He brought the same strong leadership to the Museum of Science. Roger Williams has chosen well.”

“I have met very few people in my more than 50 years in American higher education who had all the component parts necessary to lead an institution, and Yannis is one of them,” said Sol Gittleman, Provost at Tufts University from 1981 to 2002. “Besides his God-given intelligence, he has another kind of knowledge – emotional intelligence. Both are required to succeed in the very special environment of an American university.”

“Roger Williams University is very fortunate to be hiring a man with his talents and honesty,” said Malcolm L. Sherman, the former Museum of Science board chair who headed the search committee that hired Miaoulis. “He has a good strategic sense as to what his environment requires, whether at Tufts or at the museum. He is a very good fundraiser – he led a capital campaign that far exceeded its goal. He has excellent people skills and a strong sense of honesty. Put that all together, and you have a terrific combination.”

“President-Designate Miaoulis has a unique perspective to bring to RWU, having been a leader at both an academic institution and a nonprofit enterprise,” said Professor Susan M. Bosco, President of the RWU Faculty Senate and a member of the Presidential Search Committee. “He has the external connections that will help the university in its efforts to fulfill its mission. His empowering leadership style is an excellent fit for our entrepreneurial culture.”

Yelnosky noted that Miaoulis also displays a strong student focus. “During the search process, he visited the university cafeteria – undercover – and talked to students about their experience at Roger Williams,” Yelnosky noted.

“Dr. Miaoulis will bring a unique energy to our institution and invigorate the campus in exciting new ways,” said Kayla Devin, President of the RWU Student Senate and a member of the Presidential Search Committee. “His dedication to learning at every stage is evidenced throughout his career and will be a perfect complement to RWU’s commitment to lifelong learning.”

Baxter and Morris joined fellow Search Committee Co-Chair and Trustee Jerrold Lavine in thanking Interim President Workman and Acting Provost Robert Cole for the leadership they have provided over the past seven months. They thanked the search firm Isaacson, Miller for its diligent work. And they thanked the 24 members of the Presidential Search Committee for the hard work they put into analyzing a highly competitive pool of applicants, interviewing candidates and helping to ensure that RWU made the best selection for the next chapter in its history.

The announcement comes on the eve of RWU's chartering day: On Feb. 14, 1956, the YMCA's Providence Institute of Engineering and Finance received a state charter under the name of Roger Williams Junior College. It soon became Roger Williams College. It built the Bristol campus in 1969. It became Roger Williams University in 1992. It established the RWU School of Law in 1993, and it opened a new Providence campus in 2015.

Born in Athens, Greece, Miaoulis graduated summa cum laude from Tufts University in 1980. He earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1984 and a master's degree in economics from Tufts in 1986, and he received a doctorate in mechanical engineering from Tufts in 1987.

Miaoulis began working as a lecturer at Tufts in 1984 and worked his way up, serving as a tenured professor of mechanical engineering from 1997 to 2002. He was dean of Tufts' School of Engineering from 1994 to 2002, interim dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 2001, and Associate Provost from 2001-2002. Since 2003, he has been President and Director of the Museum of Science in Boston and director of the National Center for Technological Literacy. He left the museum at the end of January.

Miaoulis now serves on the National STEM Education Advisory Panel. He served on the NASA Advisory Committee, and he chaired the Education Committee for the International Space Station National Laboratory Board. He served as a trustee for Tufts University, Wellesley College and WGBH.

In 2016, he won the Philip Hauge Abelson Award from the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 2014, he won the American Society for Engineering Education's President's Award, recognizing entities that encourage K-12 students to pursue engineering careers. In 2012, he won the Catalyst Award from the Science Club for Girls, and in 2009, he won NASA's Exceptional Public Service Medal.

A frequent speaker on science and technology literacy, Miaoulis has testified before U.S. Senate and House committees and served as keynote speaker at education reform conferences worldwide. He has published more than 100 research papers and holds two patents.