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RWU Appoints Stephanie Akunvabey as Vice President for Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer

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BRISTOL, R.I. – As part of our ongoing work to become a more diverse and inclusive institution, Roger Williams University has named Stephanie Akunvabey, an equity and institutional change leader, to serve as the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer.

A member of the President’s Cabinet, Akunvabey will champion RWU’s strategies for advancing [diversity, equity and inclusion](#) (DEI) across the university’s Bristol and Providence campuses. She will partner with all community members and external campus stakeholders to implement RWU’s [Equity Action Plan](#) and act as a catalyst for amplifying our institutional DEI initiatives. As VPEI-CDO, Akunvabey will serve as a strategic leader and collaborator to ensure that RWU’s practices, programs and policies align with our core values and mission to be an anti-racist, diverse and inclusive campus community.

“As a community committed to equity and inclusion, Roger Williams University has made it a priority to put diversity, equity and inclusion front and center in our institutional efforts,” said RWU President Ioannis Miaoulis. “I am thrilled to have Dr. Akunvabey join our senior leadership team and lead our shared equity work for our students and employees across the Bristol and Providence

campuses. She will help foster an environment where all students and employees can thrive, be successful and feel a sense of belonging at Roger Williams.”

Akunvabey was selected following a nationwide search and interview process that included various campus forums. The university search committee, led by co-chairs RWU Provost Margaret Everett and Alumni Association President Nibal Awad, was comprised of administrators, faculty, and staff across both campuses.

“Dr. Akunvabey possesses the combined experience, authenticity and passion needed for this vital work,” said Provost Everett. “She also has a strong track record as a convener and collaborator, and I look forward to working with her to advance diversity and equity initiatives in academic affairs and across the university.”

“I'm excited to welcome a strategic and compassionate leader who will partner closely with Roger Williams' students and alumni community,” Awad said. “Dr. Akunvabey has demonstrated leadership and talent in managing social change through initiatives that support and empower underrepresented groups with a sense of belonging. Her previous accomplishments echo our core values of being the ‘university the world needs

now' and I am certain that she will be a driving force in our ability to achieve the goals set forth in the university's Equity Action Plan."

Akunvabey will join RWU as VPEI-CDO on July 6.

"Roger Williams has made a concerted effort to create a more inclusive campus that welcomes and supports a diverse population of faculty, staff and students," said Akunvabey. "As I learned more about the RWU Equity Plan and longstanding efforts in equity work, I was incredibly inspired. I'm honored to join the RWU family as we work to build an anti-racist campus that truly values diversity. There's a lot of work ahead, but there's already an extraordinary foundation and a community of people who are ready to get things done."

A transformational leader with extensive experience in higher education, Akunvabey has worked in various leadership roles at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, N.Y., since 2009. Most recently serving as interim assistant dean of academic affairs, Akunvabey helped to develop the college's racial equity plan and classroom equity efforts, enabling Kingsborough to participate in Achieving the Dream and USC Race and Equity Center's Racial Equity Leadership Academy. In response to the racial injustice felt across the country this past year, Akunvabey led campus dialogues and

workshops to address social justice, civic engagement and equity issues. She also spearheaded efforts to celebrate the college's first-generation students with the "Proud to be First" campaign and an initiative to support students who are single-parent mothers through improvements to institutional policies and practices.

Akunvabey has an Ed.D. in higher and postsecondary education and M.A. in higher education and student personnel administration from New York University and a B.A. in sociology/anthropology and Africana studies from Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia. She is a sought-after equity and learning consultant and has conducted research on college access for Black and Latino youth in America, on access and inclusion issues in higher education in India and Israel, and on educational equity for young girls in South Africa.