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## Law School News: Meet RWU Laws New Director of Diversity

Michael M. Bowden

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October 3, 2019

# ***Law School News***

## **Meet RWU Law's New Director of Diversity**

Ralph E. Tavares brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to help future lawyers develop 'the lens and language for social justice, inclusion, and diverse perspectives'



Ralph E. Tavares, RWU

Law Director of Diversity and Outreach.  
October 3, 2019 Michael M. Bowden

**BRISTOL, R.I., October 3, 2019** – Roger Williams University School of Law announced today that Ralph E. Tavares, Jr. – a seasoned leader in diversity, inclusion, equity and access in higher education – has been appointed its new director of diversity and outreach.

Tavares, who served as director of multicultural student success and assistant dean of undergraduate studies at Providence College for the past five years, and as associate director of admissions and multicultural education at Salve Regina University for more than a decade before that, is ideally placed to build on the law school's current momentum.

"In Ralph Tavares we found an experienced diversity and inclusion professional with almost 20 years of experience in higher education," said Dean Michael J. Yelnosky. "He brings a wealth of knowledge to RWU Law, as well as personal characteristics that we are confident will make him

successful with law students. He will be instrumental in helping us execute on our latest strategic plan for diversity and inclusion, and he joins a strong team of faculty, staff, and students committed to providing greater access, opportunity, and support for individuals who reflect the full diversity of our society.”

Tavares, who will commence his duties on October 31, says he is looking forward to engaging with the RWU Law community.

“I am so impressed with Roger Williams University School of Law, its leadership team and their direction,” he said. “This critical work can only be accomplished when it is supported by the leadership, and throughout the institution. I could feel this energy when I came to visit the campus and met with the different stakeholders. Everyone is excited. Everyone is ready.”

*As our country raises its social consciousness, this work continues to evolve and grow.*

Tavares says he looks forward to carrying on the work of Deborah Johnson, the school’s third diversity director, who left this year to fulfill a lifelong goal of teaching full time at her alma mater, Northeastern University School of Law. During Johnson’s tenure, RWU Law’s diversity doubled from 15 percent to 30 percent of students identifying as racially or ethnically diverse. However, challenges remain.

“Despite this progress, and the amazing statistics reflecting an increasingly diverse student body, there is still much work to be done,” Tavares said. “I hope to be an ear and a voice for the students. I plan to do a whole lot of listening when I arrive on campus.”

Bringing his expertise to a law school environment, he adds, presents an interesting new angle on his specialty.

“Though I have worked in this field for a long time, there is no mastery of the work,” Tavares says. “With the changing needs of our country, so too do we need to change our approach to the people that our laws serve. It is critical that our future lawyers are ready and have the lens and language for social justice, inclusion, and diverse perspectives. These are ever-evolving as our country raises its social consciousness, and so this work continues to evolve and grow. I’m honored that I can serve RWU Law in this important capacity.”

Among his many roles at Providence College and Salve Regina, Tavares created and developed numerous multicultural recruitment and retention plans and programs; directed academic advising and mentoring of multicultural students – primarily underclass undergraduate and first-generation students – to help ensure their full participation in the academic and co-curricular life of the college; and served as an advisor guiding undocumented students to academic success. He also founded and chaired PC’s Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Convocation Week Celebration.

Tavares is co-president and a member of the board of trustees of Diversity and Inclusion Professionals of Rhode Island (DAIP), vice president of the board of Friends Academy in North Dartmouth, Mass., a facilitator for Justice Talks; a member of the planning committee for the National Partnership for Educational Access; and a recipient of the Founder’s Award of New

England Counselors of Color Bridging Access to College. He has been a liaison to the New England Association for College Admission Counseling Governing Board, and is a member of the National Academic Advising Association.

Tavares earned his a B.A. in English at Providence College, with a triple concentration in black studies, business studies and women's studies. He earned his Master of Business Administration from Salve Regina.

RWU Law thanks all members of the Directory of Diversity search committee: Judge Edward Clifton (ret.), Michael Donnelly-Boylan, Professor Jared Goldstein, Professor Deborah Gonzalez, Rob Hancock, Professor Susan Heyman, Lorraine Lalli, and 3L Bre'Anna Metts-Nixon, president of the school's Black Law Students Association.