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Newsroom

April 5, 2016

Introducing Urban, Experiential Campus

RWU Law on Monday formally showcased its new experiential campus in downtown Providence, slated to be up and running for the start of the Fall Semester.



PROVIDENCE, April 5, 2016: Roger Williams University School of Law on Monday formally showcased its new experiential campus in downtown Providence, which is slated to open in May and be fully operational for the start of the Fall Semester.

Designed to provide law students with enhanced access to hands-on, experiential opportunities in the capital city, the facility at One Empire Plaza will replace RWU Law's existing Metro Center at 150 Washington Street, more than doubling RWU Law's footprint in Providence and enabling the school to further enhance its outstanding experiential learning opportunities in the hub of the state's legal culture.

With its close proximity to court houses, government offices, community service organizations and private law firms, the site is an outgrowth of the law school's unique guarantee that every qualified student is afforded a substantial clinical experience, gaining practical, skill-building opportunities and helping many Rhode Islanders who cannot afford legal assistance.

In addition, the law school was one of the first in the country to adopt a pro bono graduation requirement, and many of the groups and individuals whom students serve to satisfy that requirement are located in Providence. Between the clinical guarantee and the pro bono requirement, RWU Law students provide approximately 25,000 hours annually of free legal assistance.



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 and see that they complement each other. A law center in the city will also give us an opportunity to take advantage of our strong 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 make it easier for us and our students to be part of that. - Dean Michael Yelnosky

Occupying the entire fourth floor, RWU Law's experiential campus will be a “manifestation of our educational philosophy,” Yelnosky added. In addition to space for our experiential programs there are classroom and space for the Rhode Island Center for Justice, which has an RWU Law Fellowship Program for graduates who are interested in careers in public interest law.

The Providence law campus will house the school's Criminal Defense, Immigration, Business Start-Up and Veterans Benefits Appeals Clinics, as well as space for the Feinstein Center for Experiential and Pro Bono Education, which is responsible for the school's extensive clinical externship program and home to the innovative Pro Bono Collaborative, which partners law firms, law students, and community-based organizations to provide targeted pro bono legal services.

“I am so proud that this new space will be associated with the good work the law school has been doing for years. Students will work here with Rhode Islanders in need, and that work will have a real impact on the lives of the clients and often have a profound impact on the students,” Yelnosky said.

In a 12-year lease with the building's owner, Berkeley Investments, Inc., Roger Williams University will occupy 76,566 square feet on the first through fifth floors of the office building.

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."