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Richard L. Bready Stepping Down After 11 years as Chair of RWU Board of Trustees

Former Nortek CEO leaves remarkable legacy of growth, innovation and investment



October 22, 2018

BRISTOL, R.I. – Business leader and philanthropist Richard L. Bready will step down after 11 years as chair of the Roger Williams University Board of Trustees on Oct. 25, culminating a tenure that saw RWU transform into a high-quality university known for its innovation, affordability and experiential learning through community engagement.

Bready, former CEO and Chairman of Nortek Inc., has served on the RWU board for a total of 22 years. The RWU Board of Trustees will announce the new board chair on Monday, Oct. 29.

“Chairman Bready has left an indelible mark on Roger Williams University, helping to lead a remarkable period of growth and dramatic transformation in the University’s reputation and its impact on the communities we serve,” RWU Interim President Andy Workman said. “We cannot thank him enough for the countless hours and the substantial resources he has invested in our University. He will long be remembered on campus, not only because the University sailing center bears his name, but because he has been a major catalyst in making RWU the University it is today.”

Jerry Williams, RWU Interim Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, said the University grew in size, reputation and importance during Bready’s tenure as board chair.

“The one thing that stands out for me is his never-ending desire to help others with his time and generosity,” Williams said. “When you look at the nonprofit boards that he sits on or has chaired, it truly demonstrates his sincere wish to spend time helping others and improving life for so many.”

As board chair, Bready demonstrated the ability to quickly distill and analyze information, a willingness to listen to all sides of an issue, a commitment to mentoring others, and true generosity, both in terms of time and money, Williams said. “His gifts made such a difference for the University, and the entire campus community thanks him for it,” he said.

Bready grew up in Boston and studied economics and Shakespearean literature at St. Anselm’s College, in Manchester, N.H., graduating in 1965. In 1966, he earned a master’s degree in accounting from Northeastern University. And in 2008, he received an honorary doctorate in business management from RWU.

Bready served as Nortek’s chair and chief executive officer from 1990 to 2011. He has been chair of the RWU Board of Trustees since 2007. His current term on the board began in 2005. He previously served on the board from 1984 to 1993. In addition, he was a member of the RWU School of Law Board of Directors from 2008 to 2014.

In 2007, Bready established the Richard L. Bready Minority Endowed Scholarship, providing financial assistance for under-represented students who consistently maintain high academic standards.

In 2015, RWU dedicated the Richard L. Bready Mount Hope Bay Sailing and Education Center – a completely donor-funded waterfront facility that serves as home to the national powerhouse RWU sailing team and an educational facility for students of all ages from across campus and the Ocean State.

Also, Bready has been a strong supporter of the School of Engineering, Computing and Construction Management Labs project. The board will hold a groundbreaking ceremony for the SECCM Labs building at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 25, on RWU's Bristol campus. The 27,000-square-foot, three-story structure will be an important addition to the University at a time when the School of Engineering, Computing and Construction Management is experiencing major growth.

Bready expressed gratitude for the chance to help build RWU into the vital institution it is today.

"I would like to sincerely thank you for such a fantastic opportunity to serve on the Board of Trustees for more than 20 years," he said. "I appreciate your faith in my abilities and certainly did my very best to build Roger Williams University to where it stands today. I am eternally grateful for the trust you have put in me."

When asked what he hopes his legacy is at RWU, Bready said, "I played a role in making this university better."

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