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HousingWorks RI and RWU Expand Partnership

HousingWorks RI moves its operations to RWU, creates new opportunities for faculty and staff to partner on housing research and policy initiatives



July 16, 2014 | Public Affairs Staff

BRISTOL, R.I., – On the heels of a synergetic collaboration that began in 2012, Roger Williams University has fully integrated HousingWorks RI (HWRI) into its Division of University Outreach and Engagement, as of July 1. HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University will continue to be housed at the University’s Providence campus at 150 Washington Street. The completed integration creates further synergy between the strategic objectives of RWU and the research, policy and communications work of HWRI. On top of the expanded partnership, Nicole Lagace has been named Director and will lead HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University in furthering its position as the authoritative source of information about housing in Rhode Island.

“Whether it’s our faculty sharing academic expertise or our students leading real-world projects with local organizations, the University is committed to serving the greater community. Expanding our partnership with HousingWorks RI is yet one more way we can continue that commitment,” said President Farish. “The long history of support from The Rhode Island Foundation, Rhode Island Housing and the United Way of Rhode Island coupled with our campus resources and eager student body will position HousingWorks RI to further advance important policy discussions in our state around housing affordability and the economy.”

HousingWorks RI was formed in 2004 to address a growing economic development concern in Rhode Island, the lack of housing considered affordable for much of the state's workforce. For ten years, HWRI's important work has been made possible by its founding funders including The Rhode Island Foundation, United Way of Rhode Island and Rhode Island Housing.

"In the ten years since its inception, HousingWorks RI has played an instrumental role in advancing housing affordability as a public policy priority," said Richard Godfrey, the executive director for Rhode Island Housing. "We have invested in HousingWorks because its research and communications work drives a national dialogue on the critical implications of housing affordability on Rhode Island's economic future. We are thrilled that HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University will result in more research and data analysis on policies to address housing affordability."

Since the initial partnership, RWU and HWRI have collaborated on a number of initiatives. RWU students studying historic preservation and economics have already started to work alongside HWRI staff to analyze data, gather research and publish their findings. Earlier this year, the [Latino Policy Institute](#) at Roger Williams University also collaborated with HWRI to release a second annual look at the severe housing cost burden Latinos in Rhode Island are facing. The HWRI staff have also served as guest lecturers to teach students about public policy, data analysis and applied research.

"HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University offers the University's faculty and student community a great environment for research and experiential learning on an important issue for our state," said Anthony Maione, President & CEO at United Way of Rhode Island. "United Way of RI has funded HousingWorks RI from the beginning and we are pleased to see that Roger Williams University has made such an important commitment of resources to assure that HousingWorks will continue its fact based research on housing affordability into the future. This is truly a win win for Rhode Island."

The expanded partnership grew out of the long-standing, campus-wide commitment to the greater community valued at Roger Williams. The University maintains a wide array of partnerships and initiatives that extend beyond the borders of campus and engage faculty and student expertise on topics ranging from the marine environment, historic preservation and law to small business assistance, the arts, community development and more. HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University will fall under the University's Outreach and Engagement division alongside the Latino Policy Institute, Community Partnerships Center, Feinstein Center for Service Learning and Engagement, Feinstein Center for Pro Bono and Experiential Education and the RWU Career Center.

"We are proud of our work with HousingWorks RI and partners like the United Way and Rhode Island Housing over the years. This new relationship with Roger Williams University will enable the organization to continue the crucial work of providing policymakers and the public with solid data and context around the importance of investing in healthy and affordable housing," said Neil Steinberg, president and CEO of the Rhode Island Foundation.

HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University will be led by Nicole Lagace who has served as its communications director for five years and stepped in as interim executive director last year. Lagace brings over a decade of strategic communications and leadership experience to the role. At HousingWorks RI, she grew the organization's communication initiatives and managed all public relations activities including its annual Housing Fact Book, and other special reports. She has spoken nationally on how to translate complex data with easy to understand communications tools as well as integrating social media into a strategic communications plan. Previously, Lagace served as director of public relations for the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

"I am thrilled to continue to lead HousingWorks in this new phase at Roger Williams University," Lagace said. "I'm confident that our new home, and its granted opportunity to collaborate with such talented staff, faculty and students, will only strengthen the work of HousingWorks RI and help us advance housing affordability as a public policy priority, essential to Rhode Island's economic future."