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Richard L. Bready Mount Hope Bay Sailing and Education Center 'Puts RWU On the Map'

Multifunction facility to serve as a home for top ranked sailing team and a resource for STEM education



October 19, 2015 | Melissa A. Patricio

BRISTOL, R.I. – Sunny skies prevailed over sparkling waters Friday when the Roger Williams University community gathered with the Board of Trustees and the U.S. Congressional Delegation of Rhode Island to officially dedicate the Richard L. Bready Mount Hope Bay Sailing and Education Center – a completely donor-funded waterfront facility that will serve 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.

“In many ways, the Mount Hope Bay is both our unfair advantage and our responsibility,” said Vice President for Institutional Advancement Lisa Raiola. “Its beauty is often the thing that attracts students and others to our campus, and its proximity reminds us every day that we need to take care of it. With the new Richard L. Bready Mount Hope Bay Sailing and Education Center, we have created access to the bay for competition, recreation and conservation.”

The Bready Center’s proximity to the bay is telling, noted University President Donald J. Farish, as is the fact that the facility in no way increases the indebtedness of the state.

“This is all part of augmenting our new vision of this University as a place that is deeply embedded and committed to strengthening our society and to serving the community as best we can,” Farish said. “And we designed this building in such a way that it will be accessible to others – it’s not *just* the home of the sailing team. There is a large multifunctional classroom here; it is connected all but physically to the Learning Platform where lots of marine biology work is being done; and this provides yet another opportunity to connect our marine biology programs with the bay itself.”

Still, there is no denying that the sailing team’s success on a national level was the impetus for the project, which – in addition to Chairman Bready’s \$1 million leadership gift – was largely funded by sailing team families, alumni, friends and even some team members. Other schools put themselves on the map with championship basketball or football teams, Farish said, but only those with water – like RWU – can do sailing.

“We’re putting ourselves on the national map through sailing. Before we had the Sailing Center we had national champions. We’re always in the Top 5 it seems, and this year again they competed in the finals.”

Echoing President Farish’s sentiments, U.S. Senator Jack Reed acknowledged the importance of the team’s fresh facilities, and how the Sailing and Education Center will impact the entire state, particularly the aquaculture and shellfish restoration efforts that Roger Williams researchers have been leading for decades.

“It will provide additional stimulus to our economy and a rapidly growing field where Roger Williams is a leader not just locally but nationally,” Reed said. “And it will also be a place where elementary and secondary school students can come and be exposed to the Bay and to issues of biology and marine biology. In fact it will be an important part of STEM education, and we’ve been working very hard to make the experience of going out a part of the curriculum across the country, so children can learn by doing.”

U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, and Congressmen David Cicilline and Jim Langevin each spoke about the University’s growing reputation and contributions to communities across Rhode Island, as well as Chairman Bready’s leadership and generosity throughout the state.

“This generosity will help generations of students here enjoy the special connection between Rhode Island and the sea, and between this university and sailing,” Cicilline said. “If you look at the things that have happened at this university over the last five to seven years, there’s a lot to be proud of, and the trustees and the donors and staff here have done a remarkable job.”

Connection was a running theme throughout the dedication, and Sailing Head Coach Amanda Callahan – herself a champion sailor and the driving force behind the campaign – wrapped up the dedication ceremony by commenting that the Bready Center has rallied the sailing community in ways she has yet to witness throughout her career.

“The way this has brought people together has been amazing. It’s a dream come true for us.”