



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: Jonathan Potts, 412-397-5291

RMU Board of Trustees Approves Extension for President Chris Howard

Pittsburgh, May 13, 2020 – The Robert Morris University Board of Trustees has approved an early contract extension for RMU President Chris Howard.

Howard became RMU's eighth president on February 1, 2016, and his original contract was set to expire May 21, 2021. The contract extension takes effect June 1, 2020, and runs through May 31, 2026. However, Howard will not be taking a pay increase for the upcoming fiscal year, and he has declined a pay raise the previous two years.

"Under Dr. Howard's leadership over the last four years, RMU has continued to advance the high quality of its academics, student life experiences, and student engagement," said Richard J. Harshman, chair of the RMU Board of Trustees.

"The board looks forward to continuing to work with Dr. Howard and his leadership team as they focus on executing innovative strategies to provide an outstanding academic foundation and student life experience for RMU's current and future students," Harshman said.

Under Howard's leadership, RMU launched the largest fundraising campaign in its history, [*RMU 100: Ready to Rise*](#), which has already raised \$96 million toward a goal of \$100 million by the time RMU celebrates its centennial in 2021.

The campaign has funded, among other things, new scholarships, the university's first endowed professorship, and new campus facilities including the UPMC Events Center, which opened in May 2019 as the new home of the university's NCAA Division I basketball and volleyball teams.

During the event center's inaugural season, the Colonials men's basketball team won the Northeast Conference tournament and an NCAA Tournament berth, and the women's basketball and volleyball teams each won their regular season conference titles. The facility also hosts concerts, conferences, and business meetings. The campaign has funded an expansion of the John Jay Center for the School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science, which is under construction.

The fundraising campaign is part of the university's *RMU 100* strategic plan, which Howard and his leadership team unveiled in January 2018. A centerpiece of the plan is for RMU to become a preferred strategic partner for corporations and other organizations through innovative talent development programs with some of the Pittsburgh region's premier employers – including FedEx Ground, Eat'n Park, the Pittsburgh Penguins, and Koppers.

RMU also has implemented a state-of-the-art predictive analytics system to boost retention and graduation rates. The system leverages historical and real-time data to identify at-risk students, track retention rates by academic program, and assess the difficulty of completing individual courses. The technology augments the human touch by allowing faculty and other advisors to provide highly personalized academic support.

"I am gratified by the support of the Board of Trustees, and I commend our hardworking students, faculty, and staff for the university's continued success," said Howard. "The Covid-19 pandemic has presented higher education with many challenges, but thanks to our community spirit and our forward-thinking strategic plan, RMU is well positioned not only to thrive as an institution but to raise up the entire Pittsburgh region."

Howard was previously president of Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia and vice president for leadership and strategic initiatives at the University of Oklahoma. He also enjoyed a successful corporate career at General Electric and Bristol-Myers Squibb.

A distinguished graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, Howard is a retired Air Force Reserve lieutenant colonel who earned a Bronze Star for service in Afghanistan. He earned his doctorate in politics at the University of Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar and an MBA with distinction from the Harvard Business School.

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ABOUT ROBERT MORRIS UNIVERSITY

Robert Morris University is a nationally ranked doctoral research university enrolling approximately 5,000 undergraduate and graduate students in more than 90 undergraduate and graduate degree programs. RMU offers fully online courses as well as a traditional residential college experience at its campus on 230 scenic acres 17 miles from downtown Pittsburgh. The Colonials compete in 16 NCAA Division I sports, including basketball, ice hockey, football, volleyball, and lacrosse.

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