



INTERIM PRESIDENT NAMED

LEADING THE 'Next Chapter'

Richard Feldman, a former dean of the College and a professor of philosophy, begins his tenure as interim president.

By Kathleen McGarvey

Even before he formally takes over as interim president in March, Richard Feldman has been on the job. A member of the University community for more than four decades, he's spent much of his career thinking about and working on how to make Rochester a better place for all.

Feldman succeeds Joel Seligman, who steps down as of February 28. Seligman announced his resignation to the University's Board of Trustees on January 11, before the board received the results of an independent investigation examining sexual harassment allegations against a faculty member.

Danny Wegman, chair of the Board of Trustees, lauded Feldman's record as a teacher and scholar as well as his commitment to diversity, inclusion, and the academic and cocurricular experience of students.

"As a scholar, an award-winning teacher, and a supremely capable and compassionate administrator, Rich Feldman is respected and admired by students, faculty, and staff alike," Wegman said in an email to the University community. "The University could not ask for a better leader for this next chapter in the institution's history."

Wegman noted that although Feldman's tenure formally begins March 1, the board asked him to begin work immediately on the response to the report. Commissioned by a special committee of the board and led by a former federal prosecutor, the investigation found that while Rochester had generally fol-

lowed its procedures and federal law in investigating a claim of sexual harassment, the University should make important changes to its policies and the procedures for following them (see page 8).

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"We know that there are challenges that we face as a University," Wegman said. "But there are also vast stores of talent, goodwill, and respect. With President Feldman leading us, I am confident that we can engage every part of the University community to move our great institution forward."

A member of the Rochester faculty since 1975, Feldman twice chaired the Department of Philosophy before becoming dean of the College in 2006, a position he left last spring to return to the classroom. Early in his career, he helped create and implement the popular

Rochester Curriculum, which allows undergraduates to take an active role in building a program of study based on their strengths and interests. As dean, he worked closely with faculty to develop new academic programs for undergraduates, especially those focused on interdisciplinary courses and degree options. He also oversaw increases in retention and graduation rates for a growing student body in the College, in part through the enhancement of student support services.

In 2016, Feldman and Paul Burgett '68E, '76E (PhD), vice president, University dean, and senior advisor to the president, together chaired the Presidential Commission on Race and Diversity, which involved students, faculty, and staff with assessing the state of the

campus climate and offering recommendations for improvement.


An influential scholar, Feldman is known for his work in epistemology, the study of the nature of knowledge. With Rochester colleague Earl Conee,

he contributed to the development of evidentialism, the idea that beliefs are worth only as much as the evidence supporting them.

Feldman's research has been supported by the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Defense Education Act, and the American Council of Learned Societies. He received Rochester's William H. Riker University Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching in 2016, and Phi Beta Kappa named him its Romanell-Phi Beta Kappa Professor in Philosophy for this academic year.

In his first address to the University community after his appointment, Feldman said he was hopeful that "our community can begin a period of healing and rebuilding."

Responding to the report would be his top priority, Feldman said, but he also expects University business to continue as usual.

"The teaching, learning, research, performance, and patient care that form the core of our University mission must continue unimpeded and with the same spirit and commitment our community has always demonstrated," he said. "I'm confident that with the collective spirit of all of you—students, faculty, staff, as well as alumni, parents, and other key constituent groups—the University will emerge from this difficult period even stronger." 

Richard Feldman Interim President

Faculty Member

- Joined the Department of Philosophy in 1975 as assistant professor. Named associate professor and chair in 1981. Named professor in 1991 and served a second term as chair until 1997.

Administrative Leader

- Dean of the College, 2006 to 2017. As dean, oversaw the academic and cocurricular experience of undergraduates on the River Campus.
- Cochair, Presidential Commission on Race and Diversity, 2015 to 2016. With Paul Burgett, vice president, University dean, and senior advisor to the president, led a 20-member commission charged with evaluating and making recommendations to improve the campus climate for members of all races.

Scholar

- An epistemologist, Feldman is the author, coauthor, or editor of five books and more than 70 papers.
- In addition to awards from the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and other national organizations, he was selected as a Romanell-Phi Beta Kappa Professor for 2017-18, an annual award from the national academic honor society.
- In 2011, the University of Texas at San Antonio organized an academic conference, Feldmania, to recognize his contributions to the field of epistemology.

Recognition

- In 2016, Feldman received the William H. Riker Award from the University in recognition of his work as a teacher.
- Also in 2016, the Feldman Ballroom, the main multiuse meeting room in the refurbished Frederick Douglass Building, was named in recognition of his contributions to student life.