

Patrick J. O'Connor Elected Chairman of Temple Board of Trustees

Thursday, June 18, 2009

Patrick J. O'Connor, vice-chair and former president and CEO of the law firm Cozen O'Connor, has been elected to serve as chairman of Temple University's board of trustees. He replaces Daniel Polett, who has served as chair since September 2006.

O'Connor's term begins July 1, 2009. The 36-member Board of Trustees has final authority and responsibility for the policies and governance of the University.

A firm believer in education as society's great leveler, O'Connor is adamant about staying true to Temple's mission. "Everyone deserves the opportunity to have a good education so that they can follow their own dreams and achieve their own goals," said O'Connor. "At Temple, it's always been the case that whoever you are, you have an opportunity to come here and get a degree.

"In my case, as one of ten raised by my mother, if it hadn't been for the schools that gave me scholarships and a good education, I never would have become a lawyer," he said. "I want to make sure that others are able to pursue the same dreams that I had."

O'Connor has never forgotten where he came from, a notion that's central to his life and he believes an important guiding principle for Temple. Temple has become one of the greatest urban universities in the world, he said, but it can never neglect its earliest aspirations and goals. In addition to advancing Temple's mission, O'Connor intends to preserve one of the things that make Temple so unique – its diversity.

"The university is a microcosm of the world. If you look at our graduates and you look at our student population, we reflect society in a very good way," he said. "And it's in this crucible that we create good people who with a Temple education can improve and enlighten the world."

O'Connor will join President Ann Weaver Hart in leading the university through a period of unprecedented transformation. "Patrick has a long and distinguished history of supporting educational opportunity for all, and his leadership will be absolutely critical to our success," said Hart. "We are grateful for both his inspiring vision for the future and unwavering commitment to Temple's ideals."

O'Connor joined the Temple board in 1971 as the youngest trustee in the university's history and served until 1984, rising to leadership positions overseeing finance and investments. He returned to the board when he was appointed by the speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 2001. Through his long service, he's watched Temple undergo an incredible transformation.

"When I was first appointed to the board, Temple was a commuter university and was striving to become great. Since then we've moved to another level entirely and the momentum has to be sustained."

Such momentum makes it a great time to be at Temple, says O'Connor. The university is located in a wonderful city and provides students with an excellent urban experience. He sees Temple as "the anchor of North Philadelphia and a shining spot in the metropolitan area" and attributes the institution's current success to the people who want to teach here and the students who want to learn here.

Along with the energy and momentum fueling Temple's growth, there are also challenges notes O'Connor. "We're going to need a combination of public and private support to continue to fulfill our mission, and I think that's one of our greatest challenges," he said.

Another challenge for Temple is to continue to take care of those who don't have the means or the insurance to receive quality health care, said O'Connor. "We are one of the major health care providers to our area. And that's a mission that's very noble and one that has to be understood and appreciated. The dilemma lies in how to fund this care. Here again, both public and private support is essential, which is especially hard given these tough economic times," he said.

Going forward, O'Connor asks for the continued support of Temple's students, staff, faculty and alumni. "Take pride in the institution. Know that our mission is still being met but we need your help, support, respect, guidance and advice in making it even greater."

He is also grateful to his predecessor. "Dan Polett has been an outstanding chairman of the board. I've never seen someone work so tirelessly for Temple. He listens, he cares and then he acts. It's been a privilege to serve under him and I'm delighted he has agreed to stay on as a board member."

O'Connor earned his bachelor of arts degree magna cum laude from Kings College in 1964 and his juris doctor degree from the Villanova School of Law in 1967. Following law school, he served as clerk to the Hon. Thomas J. Clary, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, before joining Cozen O'Connor in 1973.

An accomplished trial lawyer, O'Connor has been named a Pennsylvania "Super Lawyer" by *Law & Politics* and has been listed among *The Best Lawyers in America*.

His educational affiliations include serving as a current member and former chairman of the board of consultants for the Villanova University School of Law and as a member of the board of directors at Kings College. He previously served as chairman of the board of trustees of College Misericordia.

Chairman of the board of BNY Mellon Funds Trusts, O'Connor also serves as Chairman of the Board of Franklin Security Bank and is a member of the board of Crowley Chemical Company of New York City. He is a board member of the Philadelphia Police Foundation, former chair of Philadelphia's Children First Fund and a member of the National Professional Advisory Board for ALSAC St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, TN.