May 27, 2020

New CEO Appointment

The Board of Trustees of Prep for Prep announced that last evening it approved the appointment of Ruth Jurgensen to serve as the organization’s next Chief Executive, effective July 1, 2020, succeeding Aileen Hefferren, who last fall informed the board of her intention to step down on June 30 after serving the Prep Community for 25 years. Ms. Jurgensen currently serves as Associate Principal at Francis W. Parker School, a highly regarded co-ed JK-12 day school of 900+ students in Chicago.

“Ruth Jurgensen is the ideal person to lead Prep into its next era as we advance our vital mission,” said Scott Bok, Chair, and Lisa Cashin, President of Prep’s Board of Trustees. “Ruth’s history and professional record demonstrate her commitment to quality education and her outstanding leadership abilities, particularly in academic settings, as she has helped grow and develop prominent independent schools in both New York City and Chicago. We are confident that under Ruth’s energetic leadership Prep will thrive as it serves new generations of diverse, outstanding young leaders.”

“I am thrilled to become the leader of this extraordinary organization which has helped so many amazing young people of color to realize their full potential through equal access to the best educational institutions,” Ms. Jurgensen said. “From my years at Little Red School House and Elisabeth Irwin High School, I am intimately familiar with the outstanding work Prep does to support its students academically, emotionally, and practically, both in and outside of school. Now, working with Prep’s Board, its exceptional team of professionals, committed families, and dedicated independent school partners, I look forward to fulfilling Prep’s mission, as we continue to assure that exceptionally bright, highly motivated students have equal opportunity to become future leaders who will reflect the rich diversity of our nation and our world. Prep’s unique, holistic approach to leadership development gives me unlimited confidence in how much we can accomplish together.”

A passionate teacher and education leader, Ms. Jurgensen has more than a decade of experience serving in senior leadership positions at independent schools in New York City and Chicago. In her current role as Associate Principal at Francis W. Parker School, she manages the day to day operations, overseeing the educational program including 21 academic Department Chairs, the Directors of Studies, the Athletic Director, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinators and Co-Chairs, as well as operational areas including security and maintenance, facilities, and food service. Her recent work included helping to develop and implement the school’s pandemic crisis preparation and response. During her six-year tenure at Parker, she has served as a key member of the senior leadership team and driven new initiatives including the creation of an endowed speaker series and the Young Men of Color Symposium which she brought to the midwest. Ms. Jurgensen founded the Administrators of Color in Independent Schools Conference.

Prior to Parker, Ms. Jurgensen served as the High School Principal of Little Red School House and Elisabeth Irwin High School (LREI) in New York City where she was a member of the executive leadership team and oversaw the expansion of the campus and student body. In addition to her academic administrative experience, she serves in a leadership role on the Board of The Dovetail Project which supports young fathers of color in Chicago.

Ms. Jurgensen earned a Masters Degree in English and American Literature from Brown University and an undergraduate degree in English Literature from Connecticut College.
New Board of Trustees Roles

As part of its ongoing succession planning for continued strong leadership on its Board of Trustees, Prep’s Board also announced new Trustee leadership, including the three alumni members of the Chief Executive Search Committee. Longtime President Lisa Cashin has been elected Board Co-Chair. Prep alumni and Board members Christopher James (IX) and Yahonnes Cleary (P9 V) have been elected Co-Presidents, and alumna and Board member Sue Meng (XV) has been elected Executive Vice President & Secretary.

“We are thrilled that three Prep for Prep alumni are taking on Board leadership positions. There can be no better demonstration of the program’s success than bringing ever greater diversity to the leadership of our own organization, a progression we expect will continue,” said Scott Bok and Lisa Cashin.

A Marshall and a Truman Scholar, Yahonnes Cleary is a partner at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison. A member of PREP 9 Contingent V, he earned degrees from Columbia, Oxford, and Yale Law and is also a Soros Fellow. Christopher James is a Senior Managing Director at Blackstone and Chief Operating Officer of Blackstone Tactical Opportunities. A member of Prep for Prep Contingent IX, he earned degrees from Duke and Harvard Law. Prep's and Brearley's first Rhodes Scholar, Sue Meng is a partner at Debevoise & Plimpton where she co-chairs the firm’s Pro Bono Committee. A member of Prep for Prep Contingent XV, she earned degrees from Harvard, Oxford, and Yale Law and is also a Soros Fellow.