

Rochelle L. Ford, Ph.D., APR
Eighth President of Dillard University

Building on her robust resume in higher education administration and instruction, President Ford has earned a stellar reputation as a hands-on, transformative leader. Since taking the helm at Dillard on July 1, 2022, she has focused on activating on Dillard's commitment to cultivating leaders, continuing its legacy of excellence, and establishing Dillard as a communiversity. With a focus on the DU3: facilities that withstand the forecast, fortifying Dillard's staff and faculty, and financing the future for Dillard students, she envisions Dillard being a leader in developing healthy, safe and innovative communities through its living, learning, and serving community.

During Dr. Ford's first year of leadership at Dillard, the University

- Acquired more than \$5,784,755 in grants and gifts,
- Broke ground on Dillard's new living, learning, serving community building, a mixed-use student residential hall with community programming space and faculty and staff apartments,
- Established a staff council, modeled on the faculty senate, which will give a voice to staff,
- Began offering a master's in nursing as Dillard's first graduate degree, and
- Established corporate team-teaching partnerships and internships with global brands, including Current Global and Trail Runner.
- Additionally, her leadership team improved fall to spring retention and placed 77% of the graduating class in jobs and graduate school before graduation.

Dr. Ford regularly engages with the board of trustees, faculty, staff, students, alums, and community leaders, whose input empower her with tools and strategies needed to prioritize the next steps that will propel the University to an unparalleled level of distinction.

Dr. Ford recognizes the importance of maintaining a transparent and cohesive relationship with Dillard's committed alums, particularly those who no longer live in New Orleans. Through meetings, forums, and webinars, Dr. Ford interacts with individuals who are eager to support her in her mission to move Dillard forward. She listens to their concerns and suggestions, and incorporates their valued input into her planning. She is the chair of the Greater New Orleans Higher Education Consortium and the vice chair of the Gulf Coast Athletic Conference.

Dr. Ford currently sits on the boards of Business Council of New Orleans, the Louisiana Board of Regents HBCU Advisory Council, GNO, Inc., the United Way of New Orleans,

EIIA Board of Directors, UNCF Board of Directors, and Black Women Collegiate Presidents and Chancellors. She is also a member of the Black College Fund, Rotary of New Orleans, and Louisiana Women's Forum.

Prior to leading Dillard, Dr. Ford served as the dean of the School of Communications at Elon University, the second to serve in that position in the university's history. There, she led more than 80 faculty and 1,500 students with six undergraduate major programs of study, and one graduate program. She also served for four years as a professor and the chair of the Public Relations Department at the S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, helping the program to win the PRWeek Education Program of the Year. Through a provost faculty fellowship, President Ford co-chaired Syracuse's successful Middle States Commission on Higher Education re-accreditation; and she initiated a university-wide required common first year experience.

President Ford also taught as a professor for 16 years at her alma mater, Howard University, in the School of Communications, where she served as the associate dean for research and academic affairs for six years and as the former director of the Preparing Future Journalism Faculty Program. Her last assignment at Howard was to lead the university's initiative to establish a campus-wide Center for Academic Excellence.

President Ford is recognized nationally for her work in public relations. In 2021, the Arthur W. Page Society presented Ford with the Distinguished Service Award for her service to the public relations profession, and her commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in the field in 2021. That same year, ColorCOMM listed her as one of 28 Most Influential Black Females in Communications. In 2019, Ford received the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) Outstanding Educator Award; and, in 2018, Ford was inducted into the PRWeek Hall of Fame.

Her scholarship and experience include diversity, equity and inclusion, public relations, advertising, journalism, and media. A former advertising and public relations sequence coordinator at Howard, President Ford conducted research about diversity in advertising and public relations, and wrote a monthly column, "Diversity Dimensions for Public Relations Tactics," an award-winning trade newspaper. She has been a member of the boards of PRSA, the PRSA Foundation and the American Advertising Federation's Mosaic Center. President Ford co-chairs the Arthur W. Page Society's diversity and inclusion committee. Among President Ford's numerous publications are "Administrative Challenges and Organizational Leadership in Historically Black College and Universities," and "Setting a New Agenda for Student Engagement and Retention in Historically Black Colleges and Universities," both co-authored with Dr. Charles B.W.

Prince. President Ford was an editor of “Reality TV: Entertaining... But No Laughing Matter,” a 2017 whitepaper that examined the impact of media images, particularly on African- American women.

A native of Gahanna, Ohio, President Ford earned her bachelor’s degree in journalism with a concentration in public relations from Howard University, her master’s degree in journalism with a specialization in public relations from University of Maryland, College Park, and her Ph.D. in journalism from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. She also earned a graduate certificate in higher education administration from Harvard University. She was the first Clark Atlanta University HBCU Executive Leadership Institute graduate to become a college president.

Active in both her discipline and her community, President Ford is a member of PRSA, where she holds an Accreditation in Public Relations and the Arthur W. Page Society. She is also a member of the National Black Public Relations Society, the American Advertising Federation, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church. She is the mother of three adult children.

Specialties: diversity, assessment, first year experience, advertising, public relations, multicultural communication, and public relations pedagogy.