

Ron Howell Announces Retirement After 29 Years as CEO of Washington Research Foundation

Howell led the expansion of WRF into one of the state's largest private foundations

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Ron Howell, CEO of [Washington Research Foundation](#)

(WRF) since 1992, has announced that he will retire at the end of April. Under Howell's leadership, WRF earned over

\$445 million in licensing revenue for the University of Washington (UW), provided more than \$113 million in grants to nonprofit research institutions in the state, and invested over \$90 million in 112 technology focused local startup companies.



Thanks to Ron, WRF is on very solid footing as it moves forward with a primary focus on the support of life-science-related technologies."

Tom Cable, WRF co-founder

Howell joined WRF in 1989 to create a licensing strategy for the patented technology Expression of Polypeptides in Yeast, an invention by UW colleagues Benjamin Hall, Ph.D., and Gustav Ammerer, Ph.D., alongside partners at biotechnology company Genentech, Inc. The technology is widely used in the manufacturing of vaccines and therapeutics, and Hall's inventions are estimated to have improved the health of more than a billion people worldwide.

After becoming CEO, Howell led the expansion of WRF from primarily an intellectual property management organization into one of the largest private foundations in the state. He developed grant-making programs to support the most innovative research in Washington state's institutions, and in 1994 created the Foundation's venture investment arm, WRF Capital. WRF's assets have grown from \$13 million to \$300 million under Howell's leadership.

"I look forward to my retirement and look back with a lot of pride on what we've supported over the years," said Howell. "It's satisfying to know that we've helped the world's best researchers further their work. I love that I met so many great innovators and was able to learn about



interesting science and engineering, then think creatively about its role, its value, and how we could help. It's a rush to see the excitement researchers get when they discuss their work, and to see the future we have with the students and postdocs. They are so bright, they work so hard, and they inspire me. The future is in good hands. Education changes lives, and research followed by application changes the world."

Tom Cable, who co-founded WRF in 1981 with Bill Gates Sr. and W. Hunter Simpson, described the Foundation's evolution during Howell's tenure.

"When we formed WRF, our goal was simple. We wanted to ensure that UW would benefit from the commercialization of intellectual property resulting from UW research. That was still the primary focus when Ron took over as CEO. Under Ron's leadership, WRF has thrived and dramatically expanded its mission. Ron has assembled a terrific team of professionals with expertise in licensing of intellectual property, grant-making, venture investing and financial management. He has also established relationships with virtually all the major research institutions in the state. Thanks to Ron, WRF is on very solid footing as it moves forward with a primary focus on the support of life-science-related technologies," said Cable.

Jeff Eby, CFO of WRF since 2002, will assume the role of acting CEO until a new leader is announced.

About Washington Research Foundation:

Washington Research Foundation (WRF) supports research and scholarship in Washington state, with a focus on life sciences and enabling technologies.

WRF was founded in 1981 to assist universities and other nonprofit research institutions in Washington with the commercialization and licensing of their technologies. WRF is one of the foremost technology transfer and grant-making organizations in the nation, having earned more than \$445 million in licensing revenue for the University of Washington and providing over \$113 million in grants to the state's research institutions to date.

WRF Capital, the Foundation's venture investment arm, has funded 112 local startups since 1994. Returns from these investments support grant-making activities at WRF.

For additional information, please visit www.wrfseattle.org.

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