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WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (WPSD) Announces New CEO**

### ***Dr. Steven Farmer to succeed Don Rhoten on July 1***

March 11, 2016 (Pittsburgh, PA) – The Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (WPSD) is proud to announce the appointment of Steven E. Farmer, M.S., Ed.D., as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Dr. Farmer comes to WPSD from the Tennessee School for the Deaf, where he had served as Director of Student Life. In that position, Farmer supervised a staff of 85 and managed a complex independent living curriculum, among other responsibilities. Dr. Farmer has earned Doctor of Education and Masters degrees in Educational Administration and Policy Studies from the University of Tennessee and has a wealth of experience as a leader and educator for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students and teachers-in-training.

“We’re thrilled that Dr. Farmer has accepted our offer to become our new CEO,” says Melissa Scheffler, Chair of the WPSD Board of Trustees, which was responsible for overseeing the recruitment process in close collaboration with WPSD’s Alumni Advisory Committee, Staff Advisory Committee and Parent Advisory Committee as well as search firm Littleford & Associates.

“The decision was the result of an intensive 8-month search process during which our Board interviewed numerous candidates, introduced them to students, parents and alumni, hosted site visits and evaluated what each candidate could bring to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community at WPSD,” adds Scheffler. “Ultimately, we found that Dr. Farmer would best position our school for the future due to his vast management and leadership experience and his steadfast commitment to deaf education and communication throughout his career.”

“It’s a true honor, privilege and a great responsibility to be chosen to lead the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf,” says Dr. Farmer. “I look forward to helping to grow what I believe is already the greatest asset to deaf children in the state of Pennsylvania.”

On July 1, 2016, Dr. Farmer will succeed current CEO Donald E. Rhoten, who announced his retirement in August 2015. Rhoten has been a central figure in the WPSD community for more than 23 years, starting as its Superintendent in 1993 and spending the last six years as CEO. Rhoten will step down as CEO on June 30, 2016.

“I cannot express in words my appreciation for the support, guidance and trust I have received from the WPSD family and the Board of Trustees over the past 23 years,” says Rhoten. “It has been a privilege and honor to work on behalf of deaf and hard of hearing students throughout Pennsylvania. I have no doubt that students, families and staff of WPSD and the Scranton School are in good hands with Dr. Farmer.”

During Rhoten’s tenure, WPSD grew from a single school in Pittsburgh’s Edgewood borough to an institution that spans the state, now with a school in Scranton, Pa. and an outreach center in Camp Hill, Pa. WPSD is currently the largest employer of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in the state of Pennsylvania.



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“Mr. Rhoten’s contributions to the WPSD community will not soon be forgotten,” says Scheffler. “We chose Dr. Farmer because we believe he is fully capable of building upon WPSD’s success over the past 20 years. We look forward to a new era for deaf education in Western Pennsylvania, Scranton and beyond.”

In the coming months, Dr. Farmer will begin transitioning into his new role by meeting with WPSD students, staff, families and alumni at WPSD’s Pittsburgh and Scranton campuses.

“We are confident that WPSD has a capable, hard-working and agile leader for the foreseeable future,” says Scheffler. “We can’t wait to see the great ideas that Dr. Farmer will bring to the table—and most importantly, to our students.”

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**Contacts**

Ben Korman  
PR Manager  
Pipitone Group  
[bkorman@pipitongroup.com](mailto:bkorman@pipitongroup.com)

Matt Campion  
Director, Institutional Advancement  
Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf  
412.244.4250  
[mcampion@wpsd.org](mailto:mcampion@wpsd.org)