



4/5/2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gene Cochrane Announces Retirement as President of The Duke Endowment; Rhett Mabry Named Successor

CHARLOTTE, NC – Rhett Mabry has been named President of The Duke Endowment, succeeding Gene Cochrane, who will retire in June.

Mabry will become the Endowment’s ninth leader since the foundation was established in 1924. A native of Greensboro, N.C., he joined the Endowment in 1992 as associate director of Health Care. He became director of the Child Care program area in 1998 and was named vice president in 2009.

“Rhett brings a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the Carolinas and a true passion for the work of philanthropy,” said Minor Shaw, the Endowment’s Board Chair. “His experiences and expertise put us in the best position to continue and strengthen the work of the Endowment. We’re excited that this important leadership role will again be held by someone who is so committed to our organization and its grantees.”

Cochrane has served as president since 2005. After joining the Endowment in 1980, he directed the Health Care program area from 1991 to 2002 and Higher Education from 2005 to 2012. A native of Charlotte, N.C., he began his career in health care administration at the former Charlotte Memorial Hospital.

During Cochrane’s early leadership, the Endowment shifted its focus from funding mostly capital projects to supporting more programmatic efforts. More recently, he helped elevate the importance of evaluation in the Endowment’s work and bolstered communications to share lessons learned. In 2014, he led the Endowment through the significant milestone of moving into its first stand-alone headquarters on East Morehead Street in Charlotte. The new building is LEED Gold certified and features meeting space for Endowment grantees.

Cochrane has played a major role in the field of philanthropy, holding leadership positions on numerous national and regional boards, including the Council on Foundations and The Cannon Foundation. He was board treasurer of the Southeastern Council of Foundations and served on the health care division advisory council of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. He was a founding board member of the North Carolina Network of Grantmakers and a former board chair of Grantmakers in Health.

“Throughout his 36 years at the Endowment, Gene has made a significant and lasting impact on our work in the Carolinas and nationally in the field of philanthropy,” Shaw said. “Although he will be greatly missed, his extraordinary leadership put us in a strong position for the future.”

The Duke Endowment, a private foundation based in Charlotte, was established in 1924 by N.C. industrialist and philanthropist James B. Duke. Through its four program areas – child care, health care, higher education and rural churches – it distributes more than \$100 million in grants annually to organizations in North Carolina and South Carolina. The Endowment’s founder is the same Duke behind Duke University and Duke Energy, but they are all separate organizations.