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## Dena Willmore, Ripon College Class of 1967, to receive honorary degree

RIPON – Dena Willmore, a 1967 Ripon College graduate, philanthropist and retired partner and senior vice president of Wellington Management Company LLP of Boston, Massachusetts, will be presented with an honorary degree at Ripon’s Commencement May 12. The Commencement theme is “Breaking Barriers – Creating a Legacy.”

After graduating with a degree in philosophy from Ripon, Willmore started her career as a secretary at two different private equity firms. She reflected that when she graduated, “girls” were not accepted or even allowed to apply to any training programs in the financial services industry. As a secretary to the precursor of Wellington Management, an investment management firm, Willmore worked long hours, gaining the trust of her bosses and slowly started advancing through the company despite being female.

When Willmore was selected to be part of the initial partnership, she was the youngest employee and only woman in the partnership which took the publicly traded company private in the early 1980s. At Wellington, she successfully advocated for equity and balance in the workplace in terms of gender and race. She also was instrumental in forming the Wellington Management Company Charitable Fund, which supports programs to improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged youths.

Since retiring at the age of 50, Willmore has devoted herself to community service work. One of the first things Willmore did after retiring was ride her bike from the Pacific Coast of California to the Atlantic Coast of Florida to raise funds for a women’s shelter. Then, for 25 years, she was an elected official for the town of Buckland, Massachusetts, serving for two terms on the select board and 20 years on the finance committee where she served as chair for most of those years.

Today, she volunteers in the emergency department of a regional hospital and finds the work the most satisfying of her accomplishments. “It’s the highest return for effort I’ve ever gotten in my life,” she says. “It feeds the soul.”

For Ripon College, she has been a dedicated supporter. She served on the Board of Trustees for 22 years, chaired the Board from 2003 to 2009, and is now an Honorary Life Trustee. She provided leadership on numerous committees, chaired one presidential search, volunteered as host for numerous events, and led the successful *Imagine Tomorrow* campaign that ended in 2015 and raised more than \$67 million for scholarships, programs and support. She also provided the initial support for the expansion and renovation of Willmore Center, the athletics, health and wellness facility.

The College presented her with the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2007 and the Medal of Merit Award in 2012.

She has served Ripon College because “I felt I had something to give – my knowledge of the investment markets,” she says. “I had knowledge that could benefit the school.”

While Willmore is one of the top donors in the history of Ripon College, being selected as an honorary degree recipient is significant for her, she says. “It’s a recognition that I have given more than my treasure. An honorary degree is, in my mind, about the talent one has shared. The talent and knowledge that I brought to the table that was hard-earned and, I think, well-used by the College.

“The most important thing is using the talents that you have learned and earned through work or study and bringing that knowledge and experience to bear in a good way.”

Ripon’s Commencement ceremony will begin at 1 p.m. May 12 on the lawn of Harwood Memorial Union. Willmore will receive an honorary degree along with Jason Felts, serial entrepreneur, Fortune 500 brand advisor, philanthropist, film producer and founding CEO of VIRGIN PRODUCED.

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Ripon College, founded in 1851, prepares students of diverse interests for lives of productive, socially responsible citizenship. Ripon’s liberal arts and sciences curriculum and residential campus create an intimate learning community in which students experience a richly personalized education. In recognition of its academic excellence, the college was awarded a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa in 1953, placing it among a select group of the nation’s top colleges. Visit [ripon.edu](http://ripon.edu).