

Education advocate chosen to lead Cowen Institute

May 30, 2012 11:15 AM New Wave staff
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John Ayers, a former Carnegie Foundation executive and longtime education policy leader and advocate for educational excellence and equity, will be the new executive director of the Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University, President Scott Cowen announced.



John Ayers, former vice president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, joins Tulane on July 9 as executive director of the Cowen Institute. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Ayers was most recently with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching on the Stanford University campus in California, where he served as vice president and treasurer. Ayers will assume the Tulane position on July 9, Cowen said.

As a member of the Carnegie senior leadership team, Ayers contributed to the foundation's efforts to rethink the research infrastructure supporting public education. In addition, he supervised Carnegie's \$83 million endowment and investment policy and served as secretary to its board of trustees.

“I can assure you that John couldn't be more excited about coming to New Orleans to help us advance the Cowen Institute's mission and move the institute's work to the next phase,” Cowen said, “as well as continue the reform effort at the local and state level.”

Ayers' passion for education reform and policy, understanding of urban educational landscapes and executive experience made him the best candidate to lead the [Cowen Institute](#), the Tulane president said.

Ayers spent most of his career in Chicago, where he led successful urban school reform strategies and was one of the key figures in Illinois' early charter school movement.

He served as vice president for strategic partnerships at the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, working to strengthen quality review and oversight of the growing charter school sector.

For 11 years, Ayers was the executive director of Leadership for Quality Education, part of a Chicago senior business leadership group. While there, he spearheaded the implementation of two landmark urban school reform laws and chaired the steering committee of the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago.