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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**NORTHWEST NONPROFIT EXECUTIVE NAMED  
“INTERIM OF THE YEAR” BY THIRD SECTOR COMPANY**

*Deb Merle Honored for Achievements in Strategic Transitional Leadership at Seattle Nonprofit*

Deb Merle of Olympia, Washington has been named “Interim of the Year” for 2019 by Third Sector Company for her exemplary leadership as Interim Executive Director of Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) in Seattle. Merle is the sixteenth recipient of the company’s highest national honor that recognizes professionals for providing exemplary transitional leadership to nonprofit organizations, associations and congregations.



**DEB MERLE**

*Named “Interim Executive of the Year” by Third Sector Company*

Merle stepped into the leadership role at EOS earlier this year at a pivotal point in the organization’s history during the transition of a highly successful founding leader.

"Deb Merle is exactly what we needed," says Dr. Deborah Wilds, Board President of EOS. "She has adapted quickly to help lead our organization through a period of significant change. As our interim CEO, Deb has had to facilitate challenging decision-making and problem-solving processes, and demonstrate an openness to work with people as each person experiences organizational change in their own way. Her wealth of experience in education combined with an ability to work with a highly engaged and diverse board of directors have all contributed to a transition process that has exceeded our expectations of what an interim can do for an organization."

During Deb’s career in public education research, advocacy and policy making, she worked to advance equity with a focus on how best to equip students of color and low-income students for success in college. Deb earned her B.A. in Political Science and her M.A. in Educational Psychology, both from the University of Washington.

Prior to her work at EOS, Deb served as Interim Executive Director of the Washington State Board of Education, Executive Director of the California State Board of Education and Education Policy Advisor to three governors in Washington.

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“I’m grateful for this recognition from fellow interim executives,” says Merle. “It has been my honor to serve in this capacity and support the work of EOS during the organization’s transition from founding CEO to new leadership. I’ve dedicated my career to promoting equitable access to programs and opportunities that prepare students for college and for life. Having the opportunity to support passionate people who are doing the tangible work of ensuring equitable access, has been a joy and an unforgettable learning experience for me.”



Merle was presented an engraved award and honored in front of her peers at a Third Sector Company event on Saturday, September 7 in Redmond, Washington. “The entire transitional leadership profession is edified and enriched because of the demonstrated accomplishments of interim chief executives like Deb Merle,” said Jeffrey R. Wilcox, CFRE, President of Third Sector Company. “Deb’s work exemplifies what we set out to do for nonprofit organizations 18 years ago when our firm was founded to fully develop and advance the interim management profession.”

Third Sector Company, through its Interim Executives Academy, is the only organization in the United States to recognize outstanding achievements in interim leadership for nonprofit organizations. In his presentation to Merle, Wilcox said, “When Deb spoke to the aspiring interims at our most recent Academy in Seattle, it was clear that her accomplishments at EOS are laying a foundation to help set standards for quality interim leadership which are just now being recognized as a sophisticated management science and a succession planning solution for the nonprofit sector.”

Founded in 2002, Third Sector Company is a full-service leadership continuity support organization for nonprofits offering executive performance planning, counseling and review, interim leadership, succession planning services, and executive search and onboarding. The Seattle-based Interim Executives Academy is among the most comprehensive and regimented training and support programs for interim nonprofit leaders in the United States.

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The sculpture award presented to Deb Merle by Third Sector Company was inscribed with the following tribute:

*Your Achievements as a Nonprofit Interim Leader  
Have Created a Lasting Legacy for Others  
To Find Higher Ground in Their Service to Others*

*DEB MERLE  
Interim Executive of the Year  
Third Sector Company, Inc.  
2019*