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Emily Couric Leadership Forum Announces 2017 Women's Leadership Award Winner Val Ackerman

Charlottesville, Virginia -- The Emily Couric Leadership Forum will present its 2017 Leadership Award to Val Ackerman at its Seventeenth Annual Emily Couric Leadership Luncheon. The award acknowledges an exceptional woman who exemplifies leadership in her profession and her community, with Emily Couric herself receiving the first honor in 2001.

From being a dominant player on the basketball court at the University of Virginia to serving as Commissioner of the Big East Conference Val Ackerman has risen to the pinnacle at every level of sports. A natural leader who exemplifies the perfect balance of business savvy and sports innovation, Ackerman remains a steadfast champion for women's sports. At the University of Virginia, she was one of the school's first female athletes to receive an athletic scholarship, five years after the passage of Title IX. She was a starter for the Cavaliers' basketball team for four years, captain for three, and was twice named Academic All-American. She was also the school's first women's basketball player to score 1,000 points. Ackerman earned a law degree from UCLA and served as special assistant to National Basketball Association (NBA) Commissioner David Stern. She later became Vice-President of Business Affairs for the NBA. She was named the first President of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) in 1996. She served as president of USA Basketball from 2005-08 and spent eight years as the U.S. representative to the International Basketball Federation.

Today, Ackerman leads the Big East Conference as Commissioner of ten universities. Leveraging her well-honed business acumen, she has repositioned a once influx organization into a national powerhouse. In 2016, she was presented with the Women's Sports Foundation's Billie Jean King Contribution Award. Her legacy of work in sports, business and academia has fostered and empowered women and girls to pursue sports, not just as players on the field, but also as leaders in business and beyond.

Former head coach of UVa Women's Basketball, Debbie Ryan, who knew both Emily Couric and Val Ackerman well said, "I am thrilled that Val Ackerman has been chosen for the Emily Couric Leadership Award this year. Val and Emily have a great deal in common as both showed courage, humility and uncompromised leadership in their professions. These two women, as the young women nominated for the scholarships will learn, set a standard for excellence as role models that is unsurpassed among leaders today."

Ackerman will be the featured speaker at the annual Emily Couric Leadership Luncheon on April 24 at the Omni Hotel. Tickets to the luncheon may be purchased at www.emilycouricleadershipforum.org. At the luncheon the forum recognizes the recipient of its Women's Leadership Award and presents the \$30,000 Emily Couric Leadership Scholarship to an outstanding female high school senior from the Charlottesville region selected for demonstrated leadership in her school and community. An additional \$45,000 in scholarships will be awarded to the remaining finalists.

Ackerman joins a distinguished roster of past honorees that includes Emily Couric, Katie Couric, Rita Dove, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Caroline Kennedy, Donna Brazile, Anna Quindlen, U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe, Tina Brown, Dr. Silvia Earle and Nikki Giovanni.

About the ECLF

The Emily Couric Leadership Forum is dedicated to honoring Emily Couric's contributions to our community by encouraging all women to adopt an active role in government, public issues, and policy debates affecting their communities, and to inspire young women to pursue activities which will enable them to become effective leaders. ECLF is a Charlottesville Albemarle Community Foundation donor advised fund. For information, visit <http://www.emilycouricleadershipforum.org> or contact LeAnne Brubaker at 434-981-7620.

Photo from Ackerman blog:

<http://www.si.com/thecauldron/2016/08/22/rio-olympics-val-ackerman-big-east-women-sports>

http://cdn-s3.si.com/s3fs-public/2016/08/22/val_ackerman_400x400.png

