

Robert Long '79

Peachtree Corners, GA

Region II Alumni Trustee Candidate

Raised in Washington, D.C., by a single mother who focused on her children's education, through his mother's persistence, Robert Long had been able to attend a private boarding school in Virginia. He credits his Spanish teacher there for "seeing potential in me. He suggested I apply to Princeton and took me by train to visit the campus."

A pragmatist from the start, Robert Long chose chemical engineering as a major for its reputation: higher-paying positions after graduation. That major led to summer internships with Procter & Gamble, where he discovered how much he enjoyed solving consumer problems for everyday tasks. After graduation, Long worked at P&G for 25 years. He then joined The Coca-Cola Company, where he retired after 17 years. This retirement was short-lived, as he joined Kimberly-Clark, where he worked for three years until retiring in 2024. In his last two roles, he reported to the CEO and was a member of the executive leadership team as senior vice president Research & Development and chief innovation officer at Coca-Cola and chief Research & Development officer at Kimberly-Clark.

Long is grateful that his career allowed him to deliver better consumer experiences on all continents through a wide range of global consumer brands — including Tide and Ariel detergents, Max Factor cosmetics, Always and Tampax personal care products — and in beverages such as Coke Zero. His career included 11 years overseas in Venezuela, Germany and Japan, working on global and local innovation that could win against local competition. "These experiences," he shares, "reinforced the power of a sense of belonging across all levels of an

organization as an enabler for gathering insights for new opportunities.” Long believes a culture of belonging led to some high impact local market innovations, such as Fanta Furu Furu, a carbonated gelatin drink in Japan, Black Alldays pantliners in Germany, Sugar Free Slurpies in the U.S., and Ace con Blanqueador in Latin America. The Ace innovation was special to Long because it leveraged a deep understanding of low-income consumer habits to apply expensive color-safe bleach in an affordable product.

To gain access to what he considered the best science available, Long often led teams to work with universities and startups. He feels his ability to identify and nurture partnerships helped advance winning opportunities. The very successful Fairlife and Core Power dairy business at Coca-Cola are examples where Long tapped into the relationship he had with a dairy collaborative that had advantageous capabilities.

In addition to innovation, Long led quality and safety functions that were responsible for technical crisis management. In one memorable example, he had to urgently address dangerous factory fires for a new detergent formulation. He led his team to build trust in short-term measures to safely keep production going while, in parallel, determining a permanent solution.

Long identifies two key things he has carried with him from his time at the University: the importance of networking with his classmates and peer mentoring by the student-run chapter of the Society of Black Engineers. He went on to prioritize creating similar networks, including being a founding member of a Black Research & Development community at Procter & Gamble. At the University, he participated at Empower 2021: Celebrating Black Academic

Entrepreneurship, where he was a panelist during this virtual conference on “Corporate Partnerships: Accelerating Your Startup's Velocity.” In early 2025, he was among alumni at a Black History Month Luncheon hosted by the Princeton Chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers. He has also given back to his high school. Starting in 2012, he spent nine years as a trustee of Woodberry Forest School. His family also established a scholarship there in his mother’s name.