

Wentworth Institute of Technology President looks ahead



Mark Thompson, Wentworth Institute of Technology President, talks about the university's goals in the year ahead; its strong support and connection to the Boston community and the opportunities available to students and their families. Key to that are the four foundations the university builds upon: inclusive excellence, high-value learning, an exceptional student experience, and strong partnerships with industry, the community, and the alumni.

BBJ: Wentworth's pipeline program for Boston youth is being held out as a national model. Why and how did this happen?

President Thompson: Since our founding, we've been known for admitting students with great potential but who may need additional financial or other support. We've taken a different approach than many programs, focusing on giving students meaningful and real-world learning experiences and not just focusing on remedial education or only high academic achieving students. Our students come out of these efforts confident and excited to pursue college. In addition, we've built up a network of crucial allies, including local high schools, city and business leaders, and generous foundations and donors. While our students inspire us, our employers push us. They are looking to grow by recruiting talented problem solvers from under-represented populations with expertise in STEM, design, and management.

BBJ: The university has actively expanded its Boston pipeline programs lately. To what do you attribute this success?

President Thompson: That is true. We have had a few new initiatives coming online and reached some new milestones with existing City programs. Our summer bridge program for Boston students, called RAMP, is realizing record enrollment this summer with a 30 percent increase from the year before, 54 percent increase over the last two years. That program just provided education and a stipend to more than 60 Boston residents who have committed to Wentworth for this fall. See website report.

Boston enrollment at Wentworth has nearly doubled since last year, with 130 students from the City enrolling at the university. An increase in available financial aid has helped with this trend, but it's also due to the university's commitment to inclusive excellence and sustained work to build a pipeline to inner-city schools through our



other college access programs, dual credit and the "Year 13" courses.

BBJ: Wentworth has become a top destination for a lot of first-generation students—those young men and women who are the first members of their families to go to college. How do you interpret that level of interest?

President Thompson: It correlates directly with Wentworth's reputation for being a school of opportunity, a place where students can get an affordable and powerful education based on an active-learning model, whether designing and building solutions in labs and studios or out solving real problems in the world. Its reputation is a place where you come to learn and leave with actual work experience because of our cooperative learning model, which requires each student to complete two semesters of full-time work. Ninety eight percent of our graduates are employed or pursuing graduate school within six months

of graduation. Many end up working where they did their co-ops.

BBJ: Before the pandemic stopped us in our tracks, you launched a strategic plan for Wentworth. Where do things stand with that now?

President Thompson: We are on track or even a little ahead of where I thought things might be at this point. We certainly have been assembling an outstanding senior leadership team. We have recruited Wentworth's first ever vice president for diversity and inclusion and first director of Veterans affairs, among others. We are building on the four foundations that I talked about early in my tenure, which are inclusive excellence, high-value learning, providing an exceptional overall student experience, and developing and implementing strategies to maximize the mutual benefits of our strong partnerships in industry, with our community, and with our alumni.