

PROFILE KATHLEEN WALDRON, President, William Paterson University



William Paterson University President Kathleen Waldron at an American Council on Education Leadership Forum (December, 2015) defined leadership as follows:

"Leadership is not telling people what to do. It is presenting a problem that needs to be solved; asking smart people to offer solutions; gaining consensus on how to resolve the problem and then empowering people to act. But if consensus and action cannot be achieved in a reasonable amount of time, then the leader needs to make a decision and move forward."-- William Paterson University President Kathleen Waldron.

In a recent interview conducted shortly after she announced her plans to retire from her presidency at the end of the 2017-2018 academic year, Dr. Waldron added one more characteristic of a successful leader – passion for and commitment to the cause/institution one is leading.

And in the midst of the complex uncertainties of leading a public institution of higher education in New Jersey, Dr. Waldron's unambiguous definition of leadership provides a template of how to succeed in the complicated job with a simple focus – the success of the students.

It was with student success in mind that led Dr. Waldron to institute one of her proudest accomplishments – a summer preparatory program for incoming first year students. "When I came to WPU as president, I saw that in some cases, students were very prepared for college and in other cases, students were lacking in certain skills that would create obstacles to their success – undermine their confidence and ultimately cause them to drop out. I believe that a public higher education institution has a public responsibility to educate and support every student who comes through its doors. The summer program works collaboratively with the Academic Success Center to tailor and cater to the needs of the student population.

The path to her own success in the world of public higher education has been an interesting and always instructive road winding through jobs in private and public academic institutions and private financial institutions. The seventh leader (from 2010 to 2018) of William Paterson University, one of New Jersey's largest public universities with more than 10,000 students, Dr. Waldron served as president of Baruch College of the City University of New York from 2004 to 2009 and dean of the College of Business at Long Island University from 1998 to 2004.

Prior to her transition to higher education administration, President Waldron spent 17 years working in international banking. She worked at Citibank for 14 years where she directed strategic planning for the Global Private Bank and served as president of Citibank International in Miami.

With a doctorate in Latin American history from Indiana University (expertise in Latin America and Venezuela) and a bachelor's degree in history from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, she first worked at Bowden College in Maine. "I loved the job, did not like the isolated rural location - I am a Brooklyn native, raised in Long Island. I enrolled in a New York University business certificate summer program specifically geared for individuals with PhDs in the humanities. At the end of the six-week program, I had three job offers that led to my career in international banking." While working in international banking, however, Dr. Waldron always maintained an academic profile by lecturing, doing research, and specifically serving on the Long Island University

(LIU) Advisory Board for International Studies. It was that board position that opened the door to her leadership jobs in academia.

“Even though LIU is a private institution, it has a very diverse student body (ethnically and economically). I became immersed in the struggles of minority students and worked closely with faculty to address how the LIU Business School was going to support those students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds so they would succeed.”

The job of president of William Paterson University allowed Dr. Waldron to merge the strategic planning talents she displayed in her international banking and academic careers with her passion for helping to provide accessible, affordable, and excellent academic education for anyone with a desire to get ahead in life.

After guiding the development of William Paterson University’s Strategic Plan 2012-22, President Waldron has led William Paterson to increase its academic offerings, launching the institution’s second doctoral program, the doctor of psychology, as well as its first fully online undergraduate degree completion program and new bachelor’s degree and master’s degree programs. The University expanded the number of full-time faculty to more than 400. During her tenure, the university was designated a Hispanic-serving institution. Enrollment of Hispanic students has grown to nearly 30 percent of the overall student population, continuing the university’s long-standing commitment to diversity and tradition of educating first-generation college students. The university also has been honored as a “Military-Friendly School.”

During President Waldron’s administration, the institution launched an extensive building and renovation project that has transformed the academic facilities at the core of the campus. University Hall, William Paterson’s newest academic building, was funded in part by \$30 million from the *Building Our Future* bond, and opened in January 2016. The renovation of two academic buildings, Preakness Hall and Hunziker Hall received \$7.2 million in funding from the *Building Our Future* bond and the Capital Improvement Fund. The University also completed a \$2.5 million high-definition upgrade to its two-studio TV complex.

President Waldron, however, defines a successful academic experience as one that includes becoming better citizens in one’s local community and beyond. President Waldron led university efforts to expand initiatives that provide students with opportunities outside the classroom. The university increased offerings for student participation in civic engagement opportunities through academic courses and co-curricular activities, and became the first public New Jersey college or university that requires new undergraduates to take a course on civic engagement.

Dr. Waldron also served as a co-founder of New Jersey Campus Compact, a presidents’ higher education coalition that promotes community prosperity through purposeful civic and community engagement. Colleges and universities are vital agents and architects of a diverse democracy, committed to educating students for responsible citizenship in ways that both deepen their education and improve the quality of community life.

The institution also enhanced its focus on active involvement by undergraduate students in research and other scholarly and creative activities with faculty, providing additional support for travel to regional, national, and international conferences. The university implemented enhanced career development support for students, including the establishment of the Pesce Family Mentoring Institute, connecting successful professionals as mentors to select undergraduate students.

Long committed to environmental sustainability and energy conservation, the university instituted numerous campus-wide conservation programs, including a solar panel installation that continues to rank as one of the largest university installations in the United States, and other energy efficiency efforts that have resulted in a significant reduction in natural gas and electricity usage and in carbon gas emissions, as well as more than \$20 million in total energy savings. Most recently, University Hall was certified as LEED Gold by the U.S. Green Building Council. President Waldron signed the Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment and the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, became a member of the New Jersey Higher Education Partnership for Sustainability, and most recently signed on to "We Are Still In," a statement by more than 1,200 governors, mayors, businesses, investors, and colleges and universities from across the U.S. or with significant operations in the U.S. in support of the Paris Climate Agreement.

After this breath-taking, fast-paced professional career, Dr. Waldron now intends to "chill out" for a few months before embracing her next challenge in life. "I have been advised not to jump into anything too quickly and to make sure that whatever I do, I am really passionate about it."

Wherever she lands, her colleagues are sure she will be continuing her life's work of making a difference in the lives of others. "We have been very lucky to have someone as skilled as Kathy Waldron to be a part of the journey of this institution," said Fred Gruel, chair of the William Paterson University Board of Trustees. "Her impact on current and future generations of students is laudable and tangible."