



News release

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Contact: Lee Colony 262-564-2512

262-359-0798 (cell)

New Gateway president says open doors for the overlooked, meet needs of students and community

Newly appointed Gateway Technical College President and CEO Veronique Tran says leadership, to her, is a calling.

A calling to lead a college into its future but, maybe even more importantly, a calling to see and care for those who are too often overlooked or left at the margins and to help open doors for as many students and community members as possible.

“Each of us may draw our hope and sense of purpose from different places. We may have different whys,” Tran told the audience at her inauguration ceremony held today in HARIBO Hall in the Madrigrano Conference Center on the college’s Kenosha Campus. “This is my ‘why.’”

Tran’s inspiring speech covered her family’s journey from Vietnam to the United States during the Fall of Saigon in 1975 to her educational and leadership journey that brought her to her current role.

“Never in my wildest dreams, as that little girl who arrived in America as a refugee, could I have imagined that one day I would stand before you as president of a college,” said Tran. “And that makes me wonder: Who is sitting in one of our classrooms today who cannot yet imagine the future ahead of them?”

“Who is driving past one of our campuses today who just needs to turn into the parking lot, come inside and start asking questions? What hopes are they carrying? What doors might Gateway help them discover? What might be waiting on the other side? What kind of navigator might they become?”

Tran is Gateway’s 11th leader since 1971. The event today marks the first time the college has held an inauguration ceremony for an incoming president.

Layla Merrifield, Wisconsin Technical College System president, told the audience – in person and those watching the livestream – that Tran steps into a role deeply rooted in history and innovation and is well suited to succeed.

“I was immediately struck by Dr. Tran’s passion for higher education, her curiosity about the communities she serves and her commitment to building relationships,” said Merrifield. “It was clear to me that she understands the important role technical colleges play in changing lives.

“I also sensed that she is someone who will honor Gateway’s strong foundation while encouraging all of us to think boldly about the future. She will undoubtedly challenge the college community to continue raising the bar, embracing innovation and finding new ways to serve students and employers in an ever-changing world.”

Zaida Lange-Irisson, Gateway Technical College Board of Trustees Chairperson, said she’s seen the importance of the college as a student and then as a member of the board.

“Dr. Tran, the board has great confidence in you and in your ability to lead Gateway forward with purpose,” said Lange-Irisson. “While today we inaugurate one

president, the work ahead is about thousands of people – the students, employees, employers and communities you now have the opportunity to lead and serve.

“And, through your leadership, we look forward to seeing thousands more Gateway stories unfold. We welcome you. We believe in you.”

Tran pointed to the college’s history of being the first publicly funded technical college in America and said she will continue to build on that legacy. “It’s not only to preserve that legacy, but to build Gateway’s next chapter – together,” she said.

Tran said her initial thoughts as she walked through the college and its several campuses and locations was that it felt comfortable to her, as if this was an intersection and opportunity that was destined to become reality for her.

“When I toured Gateway’s technical and healthcare programs, I felt another kind of familiarity. Again and again, I saw pieces of my own training and professional experience reflected back to me – from engineering and biomedical training to advanced manufacturing, information technology, construction sciences and transportation technology,” she said.

“I saw it, too, in Gateway’s pathways for students – dual credit, transfer and the opportunity to begin here and continue toward a bachelor’s degree. So much of my journey seemed to converge here so, in more ways than one, Gateway feels like home.”

Tran said important work is already underway across Southeastern Wisconsin and her vision is to build on that momentum and to not shy away from change but to learn, adapt and navigate what comes next.

“Gateway has a unique role to play because we sit at important intersections – connecting students and families, K-12 schools and universities, employers, workforce partners and our communities,” said Tran.

“Our opportunity is to build upon the good work already underway, to connect, contribute, convene where helpful, and help translate our region’s hopes into the talent, education and workforce capacity needed for the future.”

To see the entire inauguration, go to: www.gtc.edu/inauguration

To see photos of the event: <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjD2Co9>

Gateway Technical College's mission is to deliver industry-focused education that is flexible, accessible and affordable for our diverse community. The college collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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