

RICHARD GUARASCI

Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa

Richard Guarasci is a New Yorker, through and through.

More than a century ago, his grandfather Louis landed at Ellis Island and settled in Brooklyn, where two generations of American Guarascis were raised. Richard grew up in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn, earning a bachelor's degree in economics at Fordham University before leaving Gotham. He enrolled in the graduate economics program at Indiana University Bloomington, where his interest in public policy led to a Ph.D. in political science.

It was during his first appointment as a professor, at St. Lawrence University, that Richard discovered his dual talents for administration and curricular innovation, leading a group that created SLU's groundbreaking First-Year Program. This was followed by a stint as dean of Hobart College, which prepared him for his return to New York City in 1997 as provost at Wagner College.

Almost immediately, Richard Guarasci proved himself a great match for the college on the hill, leading faculty in a major curricular reorganization that produced the Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts, instituted just a year after his arrival.

In 2002, when President Norman Smith announced his pending departure, Richard Guarasci was the trustees' unanimous choice as his successor.

Since becoming president, Richard Guarasci has reinforced the College's finances and its campus. During his tenure, the endowment has grown from \$4 million to around \$92 million. In 2010, Wagner opened its first new residence hall in four decades, Foundation Hall. Two years later, the College completed an exterior renovation of its architectural signature, Main Hall.

Richard Guarasci has also strengthened Wagner's ties to the surrounding community. In 2009, he initiated a partnership between Wagner College and a coalition of businesses, schools, churches and nonprofits in the nearby neighborhood of Port Richmond that was designed to address significant challenges within the community while enhancing student learning and raising civic awareness. It led to a college preparedness campaign called 30,000 Degrees, which united Wagner College with St. John's University and the College of Staten Island in working with local public schools to generate an additional 30,000 college degrees among Staten Islanders within 10 years. Aligned with both of these initiatives, the Port Richmond Partnership Leadership Academy has brought successive cohorts of students from Port Richmond High School to study on the Wagner campus each summer, many of whom have enrolled at Wagner as remarkable student leaders.

Richard Guarasci has not only been a leader at Wagner College; he has also been a national leader in the higher education community, heading up the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, New American Colleges & Universities, the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, and Campus Compact. He recently served as board chairman of the Association of American Colleges & Universities.

Before he concludes his presidency next month, it is our privilege and pleasure to recognize Richard Guarasci, the longest-serving president in Wagner College history, with the degree of doctor of humane letters, *honoris causa*.