Sheila Harrity G’92
Principal, Worcester Technical High School, Worcester, MA

Principal, 2011 Breakthrough School, Worcester Technical High School

The 1999 Worcester Public Schools’ Teacher of the Year, Harrity leads WTHS, one of 10 schools selected by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the MetLife Foundation that serve larger numbers of students who live in poverty and are high-achieving or dramatically improving student achievement.
C ombine dedicated faculty, outstanding facilities and a shared vision and anything is possible. Sheila Harrity G’92, principal of Worcester Technical High School (WTHS), should know. WTHS was named a Breakthrough School, one of just 10 in the country, recognized for its best practices and outstanding student results. Harrity accepted the award from the MetLife Foundation at the National Association of Secondary School Principals’ Conference in San Francisco in February 2011.

In four years since moving into a new $90 million facility WTHS has garnered several honors. “Working here [at Worcester Tech] is an educator’s dream,” Harrity explained. “It’s a beautiful facility with all of the equipment and technology needed to support student education, with cutting-edge technology in the vocational technical area to properly prepare students with 21st century skills. It’s a ‘can-do’ atmosphere. The faculty feel supported and appreciated.”

WTHS enrolls 1,400 students in 24 technical programs, with 70 percent of its students pursuing post-secondary education. It has quickly become a source of great pride for the city.

Harrity sees her role as helping develop the full potential of the students, the faculty and the facility. “All of the work and dedication that went into this building would be for nothing if we weren’t producing the next generation of workers for central Massachusetts,” she stated. “I’m very proud to say that the students and staff are exceptional.”

Among her staff are Assumption alumni Mark Foran ’77, G’80, chair of the special education department, the 2005 WTHS Teacher of the Year and finalist for Worcester Public Schools (WPS) Teacher of the Year; Brian Potter ’98, G’00, director of guidance; and Frances Meringolo ’76, head of the social studies department and a former WTHS and WPS Teacher of the Year. “I am understandably proud of the Assumption alumni with whom I work. Mark, Brian and Frances have earned leadership positions and are important members of the amazing faculty here at Worcester Tech.”

Worcester has always been home for Harrity. She grew up in Worcester and went to Providence College, earning a B.A. in social work. She came back to earn her master’s in early childhood education from Worcester State College and began teaching at Worcester’s Millbury Street School. She later taught life skills at Mill Swan School.

In 1990, Harrity decided she wanted a master’s degree in special education – she chose Assumption based on recommendations from co-workers who were alumni. At Assumption, she was influenced by Sr. Alice Petty. “She was wonderful, kind and able to connect with her students. I understood what she was trying to teach me because she lived it,” Harrity said. “She had extensive knowledge and experience working with the special education population.”

While Harrity understands the value of education, she also knows the importance of a balanced life. She is married to Tom Pandiscio and has two daughters, Celina (15) and Abigail (13). In addition to family and career, Harrity stayed involved in the community, coaching basketball at Holy Cross College and field hockey and softball at Doherty High School. She also became a career exploration and physical education teacher of Worcester’s Comprehensive Skills Center and served Work for Worcester’s Youth, placing 2,100 kids in summer jobs.

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After her selection as the Worcester Public Schools’ Teacher of the Year in 1999, she left the classroom to become the school-to-career coordinator for all five high schools, a position she held for five years. In addition, she was the district coordinator for Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), a program that helps average students take additional honors and advanced placement courses to prepare for college.

Harrity loves the various aspects of teaching and education. Her career has included serving as assistant principal and principal at Wachusett Regional High School and in 2006 she was appointed as principal at the new WTHS. She is currently pursuing a doctorate at Northeastern University.

The field of education is not for the faint of heart. Harrity has demonstrated her commitment to excellence by supporting and encouraging the students and the faculty with whom she works. “As we grow the programs, there is so much more that we can accomplish,” she said. For the students, residents and businesses of Worcester, that translates to a brighter future for all. ♦