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North Bennet Street School Names New President

Experienced leader to guide the nation's first trade school into its next chapter

Boston, MA — July 8, 2025 — North Bennet Street School (NBSS), the nation's first trade school and a leader in craft and skilled trades education, is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Sarah B. Cunningham as its next President. Dr. Cunningham will assume the role in late August, helping to usher in the new academic year this fall.

The selection follows a national search led by executive search firm Eos Transition Partners and a dedicated Search Committee composed of NBSS Board members, faculty, staff, and alumni.

"Dr. Cunningham brings a strong vision, deep leadership experience, and a clear appreciation for the mission that guides NBSS," said Tom Piemonte, Chair of the NBSS Board of Directors. "We're excited to welcome her into our community and look forward to working together to advance the School's impact."

Dr. Cunningham succeeds Claire Fruitman CF '96, who has served as Interim President since November. Under her leadership, the School built on its successes and made important progress toward long-term strategic goals.

"Throughout this process, we had the chance to engage with many exceptional individuals who admire NBSS and the role it plays in the world," said Brent Hull PC '93, Chair of the Presidential Search Committee. "Dr. Cunningham stood out for her collaborative spirit, creative vision, and deep commitment to hands-on learning."

With a background in arts education, nonprofit leadership, and community development, Dr. Cunningham brings a passion for student success, faculty support, and organizational excellence to the role. Prior to joining NBSS, she served as Vice Provost for Strategic Partnerships at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), where she helped secure, develop, and launch several visionary new programs focused on access, innovation, and collaboration.

"NBSS is a truly special place—where people come together to make, build, and preserve not just objects, but culture and meaning," said Dr. Cunningham. "I believe making is essential to personal growth, and I'm honored to join this community and help shape the next chapter of its extraordinary story."

More information about Dr. Cunningham and opportunities to meet the new President will be shared in the coming weeks.

[About North Bennet Street School \(NBSS\)](#)

As America's first trade school, NBSS is internationally recognized for its immersive programs and intensive training environment, where talent is nurtured, skills are honed, and lives are transformed. Since 1881, the School has helped people build meaningful lives and livelihoods through hands-on education, expert instruction, and a commitment to excellence. Career training programs include Bookbinding, Carpentry, Cabinet & Furniture Making, Jewelry Making & Repair, Locksmithing & Security Technology, Piano Technology, Preservation Carpentry, and Violin Making & Repair. NBSS also offers more than 180 short courses annually for students of all levels.

Founded in Boston's historic North End as a settlement house for immigrants, NBSS has a long history of providing transformative education and training. Deeply rooted in the community, the School supports career discovery for youth, preservation partnerships with civic organizations, and public engagement through exhibitions and events. Today, NBSS proudly continues its mission to preserve and advance traditional crafts and trades.

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