

# Walter Harrison

Trinity Class of 1968  
*Doctor of Humane Letters*

It was your parents, you once said, who instilled in you a lifelong love of learning. That gift most surely affected your path from engaged college student to devoted English professor to knowledgeable university consultant to successful higher education administrator.

As a student at Trinity, you explored your passion for American literature, earning a B.A. with honors in English, and immersed yourself in activities. You were a member of Pi Kappa Alpha, the Atheneum Debating Society, and the staff of the *Ivy* yearbook, and you took part in Air Force ROTC. You went on to the University of Michigan, where you earned an M.A. in English, and then spent three years in the U.S. Air Force before heading to the University of California, Davis, for a Ph.D. in English.

Your career in higher education began in 1976, first as a member of the English faculty at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, then at Iowa State University, and later at Colorado College, where you moved into administration, serving as associate director and then director of college relations. After several years with media relations consulting firm Gehrung Associates, you went to the University of Michigan, where you were named vice president of university relations and secretary of the university.

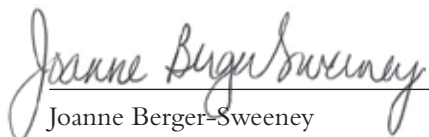
In 1998, you returned to Connecticut and began your nearly 20-year term as the longest-serving president of the nearby University of Hartford. You oversaw tremendous growth in the student population and in the quality and rigor of academic offerings. Under your watch, the university's endowment nearly tripled and the physical campus was transformed, with the construction or renovation of 17 buildings. It is fitting, then, that the libraries there were named in your honor. You also focused on reinvigorating the university's civic involvement. Looking back on your time there, which ended with your retirement last year, it is obvious that you accomplished your goal. You oversaw the relocation of the dance and theater divisions of the university's Hartt School to a site near the line of Hartford's Blue Hills and Upper Albany neighborhoods. You were instrumental in bringing two local schools—a science and engineering magnet high school and an innovative magnet elementary school—to the university's campus, helping both the community and the many UHart students who intern there.

Well-known for your personal commitment to the capital city, you serve on numerous boards, including those of Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, where you are vice chair; Hartford Promise, where you are co-chair; Hartford Stage, where you are a past president; and Capitol Squash, located here on the Trinity campus. In 2016, you received an honorary degree from Goodwin College in recognition of your dedication to Hartford.

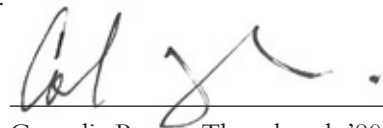
You have held numerous positions in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), including chair of the NCAA Committee on Academic Performance. Under your leadership, the NCAA strengthened its commitment to student academic success and significantly improved the graduation rate of student-athletes in all sports. For your longtime leadership as an advocate for intercollegiate athletics, you were honored with the NCAA President's Gerald R. Ford Award in 2014.

Your ties to Trinity run deep. In 1998, the college honored you with its Alumni Medal for Excellence, and in 2007, you were named the Trinity Club of Hartford's Person of the Year. You also are a member of the Elms Society.

Now, on the occasion of your 50th Reunion and in recognition of your distinguished career in higher education and of your commitment to the Greater Hartford area, I have the honor of presenting you, Walter Harrison, for the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.



Joanne Berger-Sweeney  
President and Trinity College  
Professor of Neuroscience



Cornelia Parsons Thornburgh '80,  
Chair, Trinity College Board  
of Trustees

May 20, 2018