

Biography

DAVID P. NELSON

Dr. David Nelson is the 12th president of the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. As a first-generation college graduate, David knows the power of education to change lives. He studied music from an early age, and with the encouragement of a high school band director (and somewhat to the chagrin of his parents), David attended college on an arts scholarship. His studies led him from trombone to voice to conducting to philosophy. The arts opened David's pathway into exploring the human spirit. He brings to MassArt a commitment to the ideal of quality public education that opens doors to every talented student so they can develop their skills and discover pathways into the world they may never have imagined.

David's career in higher education includes administrative posts as provost and dean, and faculty appointments in both music and religious studies. He came to MassArt from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA). MassArt is the nation's first freestanding, publicly supported university dedicated to the arts; UNCSA is the nation's second and only other. David served UNCSA as provost and chief academic officer from 2010 to 2016.

During his tenure, UNCSA experienced steady enrollment growth and improved student retention rates. He collaborated with faculty and the UNC Board of Governors to create, for the first time in the history of the institution, a process for faculty rank and promotion, and gained approval of a new faculty salary scale from the UNCSA Board of Trustees. For faculty and students, he led the creation of a new teaching and learning center. For artists and alumni in the community, David helped conceive and launch ArtistCorps, a community arts program funded by AmeriCorps and private support that places accomplished artists, including UNCSA students and alumni, in public schools and community institutions to serve high-needs students. Among his fundraising accomplishments is the completion of the endowment for the A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute, now valued at more than \$13 million.

While in administrative leadership, David has remained active in the classroom, as an artist, and throughout the community. He has regularly taught courses in philosophy of religion and religious studies. He served as music director for UNCSA's production of Twyla Tharp's *Sweet Fields*, and in collaboration with violinist Ida Bieler, presented a lecture recital on the solo violin works of J.S. Bach. David has served on various boards, including the Kenan Institute for the Arts and the North Carolina Humanities Council, and he was active in Insight Winston Salem, a leadership program designed to integrate executives into the life of the Winston Salem community.

David received his Ph.D. in Theology from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Master of Music and Bachelor of Music from Hardin-Simmons University. He has three children and two grandchildren. David and his wife Kimberly live in Boston, and he is enjoying becoming involved in the Boston community and the civic life of Massachusetts.