

GET RESULTS ▶ Tom Schwarz '66

ASK THE RECENTLY RETIRED president of Purchase College, State University of New York, what he'll miss most about his position, and he distills it into two words: "The kids." Ask him what he's proudest of during his 17-year career there, and his answer is nearly as succinct and directly reflects the first: "Increasing graduation rates; basically doubling them."

Tom Schwarz '66, who was one of the longest-running presidents in the SUNY system, is not predisposed to expound on his accomplishments, but that's OK. Evidence abounds.

The institution he helped transform enumerated the successes he oversaw: increasing student retention and the graduation rate; growing the college foundation and investment portfolio; implementing \$400 million in capital construction and rehabilitation; and building Purchase's reputation as a national leader in sustainability. The list goes on.

Schwarz, a life trustee of Hamilton, had an unconventional path to a leadership role in higher education, taking his first steps at his alma mater. In 1999, during President Gene Tobin's sabbatical, Schwarz served as acting Hamilton president, a distinct change of direction. He'd been a successful attorney, a partner, and national practice leader of the litigation department at the law firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom.

In January 2002, Schwarz became Purchase's interim president, which led to the presidency. "People say to me, 'How did you go from being a lawyer to being a college president?' My answer has always been that I had a great liberal arts education," he says.

One of Schwarz's most innovative accomplishments as president is the Broadview Senior Living Community, a nonprofit organization formed by Purchase to construct a campus senior "living and learning retirement community." Broadview



SUNY PURCHASE

is designed to create a revenue stream to support student scholarships and faculty — and to integrate its residents with the college, to the benefit of both sides. Broadview will consist of 174 apartments and 46 villas, some available for moderate-income seniors, and a Learning Commons, a space shared by seniors and students, faculty, and staff.

Schwarz remains active in the Broadview project. Not surprisingly, that's about the students, too. One reason he's an advocate of the model is that he believes it will benefit Purchase students who lack the career connections that higher-income students enjoy. People who had high-level career success and who also opt to live on a college campus, Schwarz says, are by definition interested in students.

"That translates into social capital for students who don't otherwise have it. It translates into mentoring. It translates into advising. Turn it around the other way, it potentially turns into individual philanthropy for students," Schwarz points out.

As for what else he'll do now that he's no longer a college president, he's pondering that. He knows it won't be golf, tennis, or a move to Florida.

"It could be something involved with the colleges that are having difficulty. I've had some brief conversations with people about that. It could be something dealing with building retirement communities on college and university campuses, which I think is going to happen more frequently because of the demographics," he says. ■