

The word "INSPIRE" is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. It is positioned inside a red, irregular polygonal shape that resembles a stylized arrow or a torn piece of paper pointing towards the top right.

# On Leadership

Summer 2023

## Tea and Three Ts

My day usually begins with enjoying a cup of tea and reading *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other publications such as the *Kenosha News*.

You may wonder: Why does the president of a technical college read these publications on a daily basis? The answer is simple – as a leader in a technical college, my role is not only to keep abreast with, but also to stay ahead of technological, educational, economic and other factors in the landscape that impact our communities. A technical college is an economic catalyst. A technical college plays a vital role in the economic well-being of a region. Here at Gateway, in a region that serves as a manufacturing hub and a home to a growing diverse population, it's even more important to stay up to date with regional trends.

As I have transitioned into my role at Gateway, I've been very impressed by the strong connectedness between our business communities, agencies like KABA and local chambers of commerce, community organizations and local government agencies. Gateway is deeply embedded in the fabric of this connectedness and often serves as a convening platform for our various stakeholders.

The role that I play and the philosophy that governs my work can be defined by three "Ts." The first "T" is talent. We know that all our employer partners are facing challenges with hiring and retaining talent. Gateway supports talent acquisition for our partners

by creating a robust, trained workforce pipeline. Our mission is to provide a relevant, industry-informed curriculum that allows our students to transition seamlessly from school to the workplace.

The second "T" that informs my work is training. A crucial factor in sustaining a strong workforce pipeline is ensuring that we have avenues for reskilling and upskilling our workforce. We know certain jobs that went away during Covid may not return or may return looking a little different. The role of the technical college in supporting our workforce to stay up-to-date and conversant with the latest technology in industry is vital.

The third "T" that guides my work is thought partnership. We are on the cusp of a major revolution with artificial intelligence. There has been much dialogue around ChatGPT, Mindjourney and similar platforms. I make sure that I not only stay acquainted with these new technologies but also work actively with our faculty and staff on how to infuse them into our curriculum. I collaborate closely with leaders in other community and technical colleges around the nation and professional bodies such as the American Council on Education (ACE) and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) – and this collaboration enables me to provide effective thought leadership.

I take the technical college's role as an economic catalyst very seriously. In order to support our

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### **Tea and Three Ts, cont.**

industry partners and constituents, I not only stay connected with the trends, but I also always endeavor to stay ahead. Innovative partnerships and informed disruption are vital to the thought partnership role that I offer. Working closely with our internal and external experts, we review, benchmark and implement new technologies in our curriculum.

My leadership style is collaborative and it always aims to be transformative. A significant feature of my leadership style is communication, making sure that I regularly stay in contact and communicate

with all of our stakeholders. For a technical college, stakeholders include everyone in our community, and I make it a point to work with industry partners, chambers of commerce, community organizations and our educational partners in the K-12 and four-year post-secondary systems.

I'm honored to continue our college's work and to strengthen the legacy that Gateway has established in more than a century of operation.

*Dr. Rita Raju is President of Gateway Technical College.*

