

# RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education recognizes the significant accomplishments of Dr. David P. Nelson at the conclusion of four and a half years as the 12<sup>th</sup> president of Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt) in Boston, Massachusetts, the nation's first independent, state-supported visual art and design institution of higher education; and

**WHEREAS**, prior to coming to MassArt in 2016, Dr. Nelson served as Provost and Chief Academic Officer at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston Salem, North Carolina, the country's first state-supported performing arts school for six years; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson, a lifelong musician and educator, attended college on an arts scholarship as a first-generation student, receiving his Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from Hardin-Simmons University, and his Doctor of Philosophy in Theology from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson catalyzed a systemic evolution and transformation of MassArt to an equity-centered state-of-the-art institution of creative higher learning and social justice education; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson, whose leadership in exceeding a \$12 Million Capital Campaign Goal made possible MassArt's newly renovated MassArt Art Museum, the only contemporary art museum in Boston with exhibitions and community art programming that are 100% free and open to the public; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson has broken records through his leadership of the institution, having achieved record student applications for four consecutive years, increasing overall enrollment 7%; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson, by investing in student supports including programs for first-generation students, neuro-diverse students, and health and wellness programs, received accolades for the institution's excellence in student recruiting; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson established the annual celebration of *Constitution Day* by the MassArt community to commemorate the history of the United States Constitution; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson demonstrated profound character throughout his presidency, especially in visiting with MassArt alumni and faculty emeriti critical to the institution's history and ongoing success, including with Harris Barron, founder and professor emeritus of the Studio for Interrelated Media program, who now rests in peace; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson led the development and implementation of the *MassArt at 150* strategic plan through a creative, co-design process which included hundreds of MassArt stakeholders; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson anchored the institution's educational mission in equity by creating the Office of Justice, Equity, and Transformation, which leads work to achieve systemic equity through transformation of campus culture, particularly for ALANA, LGBTQ+, DACA and international students, faculty, and staff at MassArt; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson has demonstrated throughout his career a passionate commitment to the creative arts, civic education and the pursuit of higher learning, an infinite capacity for empathy in an ever-changing world, and an utmost dedication to social justice and diversity and inclusion within the creative professions; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Nelson has accepted appointment as the 24<sup>th</sup> President of Catawba College in Salisbury, North Carolina for his strong academic experience and executive leadership, to help the College focus on its future through sustainable growth and engagement of curricular and co-curricular experiences.

## NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT

*On behalf of the members of the Board of Higher Education, the Department staff, and the students and institutions of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education honors and commends Dr. David P. Nelson on the occasion of his departure from Massachusetts College of Art and Design to serve as the 24<sup>th</sup> President of Catawba College in Salisbury, North Carolina.*

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Chris Gabrieli, Chairman  
Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

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Carlos E. Santiago, Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

June 23, 2020