



Daisy Cocco De Filippis, PhD of Waterbury *Pragmatic College President*

Daisy Cocco De Filippis, PhD, president of Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury, is a highly respected professor and scholar in the fields of Dominican authors and women's studies — and the first Dominican president of a community college in the United States.

A native of Santo Domingo, Daisy is known for her practical, common-sense leadership of a school that attracts many first-generation college students: Since taking office in 2008, she has extended library and tutoring hours to evenings and weekends; added mentoring, advising, and job-readiness programs; and created a Bridge to College office, which administers \$12 million in grants aimed at preparing students to enter and succeed in college. And, she opened an on-campus food pantry for students.

She also worked with local officials to make sure the Waterbury city bus would keep running after 5pm, to help students who rely on public transportation to get to school after work — and she convinced the Mayor to pave the sidewalks near the bus stops, so students wouldn't have to walk on dark roads.

Her efforts are clearly paying off. During her tenure, NVCC enrollment and retention have risen steadily, and the Danbury campus has expanded. In 2012, NVCC became CT's first community college to confer more than 1,000 diplomas each year — something it has done every year since. In 2017, it was named one of the top 25 community colleges nationwide in advancing opportunities for low-income students.

Daisy has been honored by many organizations, including the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund, the Boys and Girls Club, Habitat for Humanity, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Commission. She was inducted into the Immigrant Heritage Hall of Fame in September 2018.

"Community colleges are about access — life-transforming access, for many," Daisy once said. "If we believe in equality of opportunity, then attending to details about the factors affecting students' lives outside the classroom — like expanding bus service — are small ways we put that belief into practice."