



Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

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Building Bridges to the Future: Patty (Romano) Leavenworth '87



Though her grandfather, father, and uncle all graduated from Norwich University with degrees in Civil Engineering, Patty Romano headed to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University after high school. "I thought I wanted to work for NASA as an aeronautical engineer", she recalls. However, her childhood years "building" roads out of sand, mud, and stones with Tonka trucks created a calling that was hard to ignore. Patty's father was a successful engineer with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) overseeing construction of the interstate system. "I was so proud of him and knew other engineers looked up to him. He always talked about Norwich, so I connected the dots and figured that was the place to be if I wanted to 'be like Dad!'"



Patty says she knew nothing of the military aspect of Norwich and may have been one of the worst recruits to go through the system. "I had a lot of growing up to do," she says. After graduating from Norwich University in 1987 with a B.S. in Civil Engineering (BSCE), Patty indeed followed in her father's footsteps and joined the ranks at MassDOT. In 2013, she became MassDOT's first female Chief Engineer and was named Deputy Administrator in 2018. Patty oversees 2,250 MassDOT Highway Division employees. She and her teams annually deliver a \$1.2 billion construction program that includes hundreds of projects in 351 towns and cities across Massachusetts. Patty is known for transforming the way MassDOT views female engineers. Her staff brags that she has broken numerous glass ceilings, and this has helped create confidence and hope in other women.



Patty provides her intuitive engineering skills to the National Long-Term Infrastructure Performance Committee that advises the Federal Highway Administration Infrastructure R&D Program. She also served as Co-Chair of the Federal Highway Administration's State Transportation Innovation Council. In 2020 she won the American Public Works Association Manager of the Year award. This international organization recognized Patty for her combination of leading by example, inspiration and grit.

Patty has been volunteering at Norwich for many years, first as President of the Sullivan Museum Associates, then as Chair of the David Crawford Engineering board. In 2023 she became the first woman to Chair the Norwich Board of Fellows. "I owe so much of my success to Norwich, the least I can do is to volunteer, give back, and pay it forward," she says. "The values and lessons I learned at Norwich really helped shape my leadership skills. The most important lesson I learned though is to not fear hard work and difficult experiences as these are what cause us to grow and learn."

Patty and her husband, Gary reside in Westminister, Mass. They have two sons, Anthony and Gary who graduated from Norwich in 2010, creating the fourth generation of NU graduates in the Romano family. Patty is extremely proud of this family legacy; grandfather Ralph Romano, Sr., NU1930 BSCE, father Ralph Romano Jr., NU1956 BSCE, uncle Peter Romano, NU1960 BSCE, Patty (Romano) Leavenworth, NU1987 BSCE, and son Gary Leavenworth, NU2010 BS Computer Security/Information Assurance.

Records documenting women's history and experience at Norwich are available through the University Archives. <https://archives.norwich.edu/>

In 1972, Vermont College merged with Norwich University. 2024 marks the **50th anniversary** of the first women to live on the Northfield campus and the first to join the NU Corps of Cadets—two years prior to the US Service Academies!

Attend a Women Kicking Glass Event.

- Saturday, May 18, 2024 - [Women Kicking Glass So. California Gathering](#),
Los Angeles, CA
- Sunday, June 23, 2024 - [Washington DC Women Kicking Glass Reception](#),
Military Women's Memorial, Arlington, VA
- Friday, September 20, 2024 - [Women Kicking Glass Gala](#), Plumley Armory,
Norwich