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Cruz Companies gifts \$250,000 to Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology to Diversify Trades

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Shown (from left) are; John Cruz, III, Ingrid Tucker and Justin Cruz.

Boston, MA The Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (BFIT) created the Walter Williams Endowed Scholarship Fund. The endowed scholarship fund is a result of a generous gift from Cruz Companies and will financially support students from Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan who pursue a course of study in construction management, HVAC&R, practical electricity, or a related program area at BFIT.

The scholarship fund was established in memory of the late Walter Earl Williams, a longtime Roxbury resident and graduate of Boston Trade High School. After serving in the United States Navy, Mr. Williams worked in city government and as a community organizer. Mr. Williams played a key role in establishing the Boston Residency Jobs Policy, a 1983 ordinance which required that major construction projects meet employment goals for Boston residents, people of color, and women construction workers. He served on various civic organizations including the Boston Employment Commission and as director of the Minority Business Office for the City of Boston. Mr. Williams believed that “service was the rent you pay on earth.”

The newly established scholarship will provide financial support for up to two students every academic year who demonstrate financial need and are pursuing a course of study in building trade programs. The initial selection of the scholarship recipients will be notified in the fall semester of 2021.

“The influence of my dear friend, Walter Williams, on the city of Boston extends far beyond his long and successful career,” said John Cruz III, president and CEO of Cruz Companies. “He was a passionate advocate for minority businesses and a leader in community development. He saw construction as a great opportunity for wealth generation and career growth. This endowment puts into practice the belief held by Walter: the entire community benefits when everyone has an opportunity to follow their dreams. This is an opportunity for young people of color to not only refine their skills, but to then become business leaders who can then hire people from their communities, too. It’s a domino effect.”

“We are delighted to honor the legacy of Walter Williams through this scholarship at Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology,” said Dr. Aisha Francis, CEO of BFIT. “As a clean tech college specializing in sustainable development and dedicated to providing economic opportunity to minority students, this generous pledge will assure that more students of color from across Massachusetts have access to fast growing careers in the construction field, an area that Mr. Williams was passionate about throughout his life.”

Cruz Companies, headquartered in Roxbury, employs over 70 staff from the Greater Boston region. The company is rooted in community-building, prioritizing the hiring of local, minority-owned small businesses, onboarding local apprentices, and supporting opportunities for residents. The BFIT scholarship fund is just the latest example of the Cruz Companies mantra: “Cruz cares.”

“For the past several years, there’s been much handwringing about how to diversify the trades,” said Mr. Cruz. “Here is a college in our backyard that can help do that but only with continued support. We are stepping up to the plate. I challenge other businesses and organizations to do the same. BFIT is a community resource that my father attended, and I want to afford that opportunity to others like him and my friend Walter.”

Cruz Companies has been able to support the educational dreams of over 15 students since 2007 via the John “Bertie” Cruz Scholarship at Bridgewater State University, named in memory of the company’s founder. The scholarship is awarded to a matriculating minority student each year and may be applied to academic expenses such as tuition, housing, books.

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