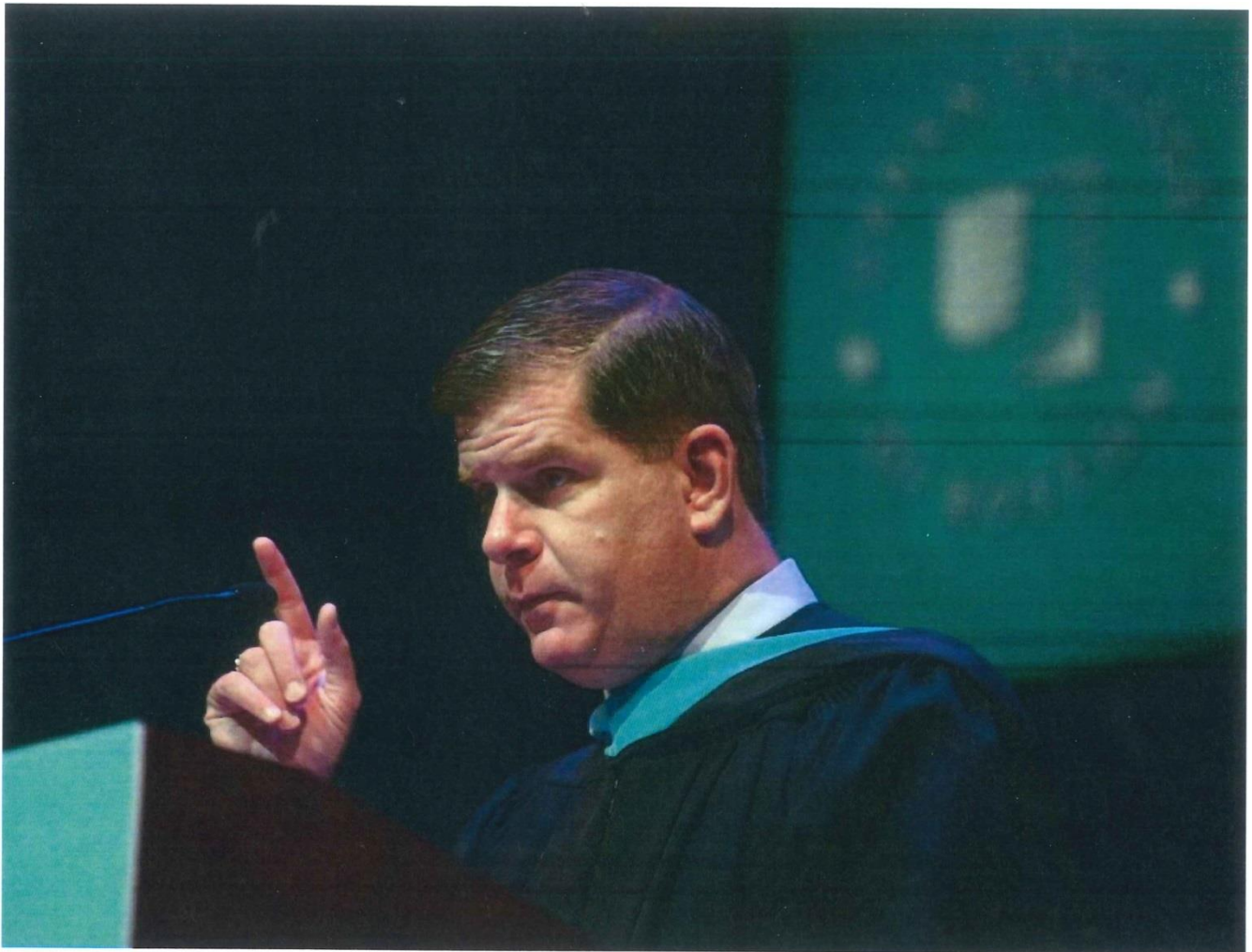


# The Boston Globe

## At Urban College, Walsh reflects on his struggles



PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Mayor Martin J. Walsh delivered the commencement address at the Urban College of Boston.

By Danielle Herrera | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT *MAY 31, 2015*

Mayor Martin J. Walsh reflected on his personal struggles Sunday during a commencement speech to the Urban College of Boston, telling graduates "you have to keep going."

"I wasn't focused in school," Walsh told 163 students receiving associate of arts degrees

or certificates of achievement. I had dreams and hopes but outside of school I had no direction and I was doing things that I probably shouldn't have been doing. Then, on April 25, 1995, I went into detox," he said. "I didn't know where my life was going; I had no education, no degree. But I realized that detox wasn't the end of my life, it was just the beginning."

The mayor went on to describe his recovery and newfound sobriety and how he became a state representative from Dorchester about 18 months later. Walsh described his drive to return to school after realizing how important education was to his career.

"I know the struggles and, if you're anything like me, you've quit school about 50 times in your head," Walsh said. "It's hard and there are demands but you have to keep going."

The Urban College of Boston is a two-year private higher education institution located in the Theater District. At least 60 percent of its students speak English as a second language, more than 90 percent work full time in addition to their studies, and the average age of the student body is 39.

After leading a procession to the Cutler Majestic Theater to mark the college's 20th graduation ceremony, Walsh, dressed in a black robe with a blue, yellow, and maroon hood, sat on stage next to college president Michael Taylor. The mayor walked to the podium to a standing ovation and stood under a light blue banner reading "Urban College of Boston: Inspiring Learning, Transforming Lives."

One of the graduates, Diamond McMillion, 30, received her certificate in human services administration. She said she has one more semester to go before she gets her associate's degree.

"I think Mayor Walsh was a very appropriate speaker," she said. "His past resembles a lot of students who attend this school and his status now shows us that this isn't the end. There is hope."

Walsh ended his speech with uplifting words for the graduates and their families.

"Continue to dream and believe in yourself," he said. "You should keep looking forward. Everyone gets a chance and that means you. Building a future not only helps you but helps everyone around you."

*Danielle Herrera can be reached at [danielle.herrera@globe.com](mailto:danielle.herrera@globe.com).*