

Resilience of QCC's Class of 2021 celebrated at Commencement ceremony

WORCESTER — On May 21, Quinsigamond Community College conferred 1,441 degrees and certificates to 1,332 graduates as it celebrated its 56th graduating class. QCC hosted its virtual commencement ceremony amidst a backdrop of powerful and motivational speakers who reminded graduates how far they have come, how resilient they are, and the bright future that awaits them.

QCC President Luis G. Pedraja, Ph.D. described the sense of pride he felt witnessing the graduates attain their dreams of a college education, and encouraged them to never stop striving for a better future.

"I never cease to be amazed by our students — your strength, determination, and perseverance. Be proud of your accomplishments. Many of you juggle work and family responsibilities, while continuing to pursue your dream of a college education. You are veterans, single parents, working adults, or the first in your family to go to college. And if all of the challenges you face each day aren't enough, you completed your degree during a pandemic and some of the most turbulent times we've faced as a nation," he said. "Each and every one of you is living history, but more importantly, you are making history!"

Commencement Speaker Maya Rockeymoore-Cummings, Ph.D., a nationally recognized social justice advocate and scholar, told the grad-

uates that the obstacles they have faced and overcome would help them throughout their lives.

"You know how to persevere in life. There is a word for this toughness and it's called resilience, and you've got it. And you should know that you can draw on that resilience for the rest of your life because there are going to be challenges ahead," Dr. Rockeymoore-Cummings said, addressing the biases that student will face even in academia.

"We know that people hold stereotypes about certain people based on categories. They just assume that they know who the person is and they make those assumptions not based on full knowledge of the person, but based on a stereotype or a category," she said. "You determine your success, and you will be successful in spite of those kinds of people. Why, because Quinsigamond Community College has prepared you."

Dr. Rockeymoore-Cummings told the graduates that because of their QCC education they are able to achieve anything that they can envision.

"Quinsigamond has given you the tools, resources, and a platform to learn. Whatever comes next, you can be sure that you are prepared. You have what it takes to further your education or go out and earn, so that your knowledge, compassion, and insight can be shared," she said.

QCC Student Government President

and Student Speaker Armela Xhidole told her classmates to keep feeding their minds with knowledge in order to continue to grow and prosper.

"Learning should be a constant operation, and learning is the fundamental prerequisite for progress in any area. After college, education should not stop. Take part in a career that helps to develop your personality and skills," she said. "Remember, you can achieve everything you want in life with hard work and perseverance. Life is constantly changing, and you must continue to evolve to become a better version of you."

Carlos E. Santiago, Ph.D., commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education said that after the last year's unique challenges, these graduates are now considered pioneers in the higher education landscape.

"While you were learning, we were learning from you in ways that will shape the college experience in the future. Teaching and learning will never be the same. We saw black and brown students who were disproportionately affected by COVID-19; many did not return to school last fall because they had to prioritize family income and family health needs first," he said.

"In an economy like ours we need college educated students to fill the jobs needed to keep the state moving forward. This is why I am grateful to

each and every one of you for earning your degrees. No matter what your major is, your skills and talents will help Massachusetts rebuild its economy and move past this pandemic," Commissioner Santiago continued. "Even though I don't know you personally, I know how resilient you are because I know what it took for you to overcome the challenges of this last year in order to earn your degree. Now that same set of skills will help you in writing your next chapter."

President Pedraja told the graduates to draw strength from commencement day whenever they experience hardships in life.

"...know that you can carry on, know that there is nothing you cannot accomplish, and know that in the worst of times you've proven yourselves and succeeded," he said.

"Remember graduates of the Class of 2021, that you are enough, and remember that Quinsigamond Community College produces productive professionals. So, you go out and you get your future. It's ready for you, and you are ready for it," Dr. Rockeymoore-Cummings said.

To view QCC Commencement Ceremony visit, www.QCC.edu/commencement-2021.

For more information about QCC, contact Josh Martin, Director of Institutional Communications at 508-854-7513 or jmartin@qcc.mass.edu.

Fitchburg State University announces 2021 graduates

FITCHBURG — Fitchburg State University recently held its 125th commencement exercises, with virtual ceremonies honoring the graduating class.

Fitchburg State President Richard S. Lapidus saluted the graduates for persevering through the challenges of a global pandemic.

"You're transitioning into a very different world from the one that you had been planning for when you started college, and find yourself at a pivotal time in our country's evolution," President Lapidus said. "The pandemic has changed all of our lives in significant ways. It has impacted the way we live and work, think and behave. It has raised questions of uncertainty about the financial future, it has enhanced political polarization and magnified ongoing issues of inequality and injustice. The experience has, at times, been chaotic, stressful and often fatiguing. In many ways, how you respond to this current situation will define your generation. You are well trained and possess the talent and skills to do great things. So, use your education wisely, summon your knowledge, insight, creativity, and courage. It's your time to challenge what is, affect real change, and realize what can be in the world."

At the graduate ceremony, Graduate Student Leadership Award recipient Christopher S. Brooks talked about his journey from serving in the U.S. Navy to becoming a physician assistant, and the decision to continue his education with an MBA from Fitchburg State. He said he was encouraged to go back to school by a patient who was recov-

ering from a stroke, who was also a teacher.

"To make a long story short, for every excuse that I had on why I could not go back to school, the teacher had given me a positive answer on how and why I should," Brooks said, encouraging others to follow the teacher's example. "Help guide or teach someone that may be feeling stuck. Lead others to help them achieve their goals. Lastly, do not be afraid to take a chance on yourself, whether it is continuing your education further, or possibly applying for that job that you saw, but did not think you'd get."

Undergraduate valedictorian Joseph Bourgeois recounted the challenges all of the members of the Class of 2021 had faced in pursuit of their degrees. "As the brilliant Albert Einstein once said, 'In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity,'" Bourgeois said. "This past year has been filled with challenges brought on by COVID. Our lives have been changed drastically, especially in terms of our academics. The transition from in-person classes to online was not easy by any means but we were able to push forward and cross the finish line. When we face difficulty in life, we must adapt to the changes and make the best out of a bad situation."

The complete virtual ceremonies can be viewed online at fitchburgstate.edu/commencement.

Among this year's graduates were the following local residents:

- Auburn**
Jessilyn S. Collette, Nicole A. Fancy, Brandyn J. Geldart, Sophia L. Laperle,

- Lucinda J. Orne
Douglas
Stacey L. Bagaglio
Fiskdale
Cassandra L. Amadio
Grafton
Sean M. MacDonald
Leicester
Jose L. Rivera
Milford
Christopher P. Pruet
Millbury
Christopher A. Brunisma, Sara Charmchi, Patricia L. Leduc, Corrin C. Marchetta, Tatiana Martins
Millville
Madalyn A. Rafus
Northbridge
Miranda L. Monaghan
Oxford
Megan M. Sterczala, Alexis F. Stisitis, Alicia Worster
Southbridge
Amo B. Bounphasaysonh, Lauryn E. Larson
Spencer
Ryan C. Bowen, Meghan I. Bowen, Christopher E. Hickman
Sturbridge
Moreen LaBelle, Laura J. Polizoti
Sutton
Samantha K. Beauchamp, Grant D. McKinlay
Upton
Kaelan B. Farragher
Uxbridge
Katyana M. Russin
Webster
Madison T. Podedworny
Whitinsville
Jennifer A. Bombard

Bay Path LPN named to dean's list at Laboure College

MILTON — Ashley Rivera, LPN of Southbridge and 2019 graduate of Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy was named to the dean's list at Laboure College during the recently completed spring 2021 semester having achieved an outstanding GPA.

In a letter to Rivera by Marilyn Gardner, PhD, JD, Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Laboure College extended their heartfelt congratulations and salutes Rivera and is wished continued academic success as she progresses through her nursing studies.

The letter further reads, "It is a privilege for all of us in the Laboure family to celebrate your academic achievements. We know that trying to earn a college credential is a demanding experience. Honor Students are a model for our entire Laboure community in having excelled in academic areas as well as having met the challenge of commitment to — and involvement on — other personal and professional responsibilities on and off campus."

To qualify for inclusion on the dean's list, a student must have been enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student and must have attained a semester grade point average of 3.50 or higher on a 4.00 grading scale.

Laboure College is a private, independent college specializing in nursing and healthcare education and located in Milton. Founded in 1892, by the Daughters of Charity, it is the longest running nursing education program in the Boston area.



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