



Stockton Graduates Told to Embrace Change by Research Council President Anthony Cicatiello

School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and School of Social and Behavioral Sciences Graduate in Afternoon Ceremony on May 11

For Immediate Release; with graduate list and link to photos, captions on [flickr](#)

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Galloway Township, NJ - Graduates of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences were told to embrace and accept change during Baccalaureate Commencement ceremonies today at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

Anthony Cicatiello, co-founder and CEO, CN Communications and president of the Research and Development Council of New Jersey, spoke in the afternoon to graduates, their families and friends and the college's faculty and staff in the Sports Center.

Cicatiello, who has long been an adviser to former Gov. Thomas Kean, told the graduates to celebrate the moment of their graduation without texting or looking at their smartphones.

"Hashtag: Just focus on this right now," he said in a reference to twitter, drawing an appreciative laugh from the crowd. "I did this, I made it, today, I graduated from college."

Cicatiello said education and industry will continue to focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in an increasingly global economy.

He said when he graduated, his competition was in the United States, but "you are competing with the world."

He added, however, "Because of you, I have no doubt that this country will remain a leader in STEM."

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“New Jersey has more scientists and engineers per square mile than any other state in the country,” he said. Over 22,000 students graduate in New Jersey with degrees in life sciences every year, and by 2019, there will be 269,000 jobs in the state for science majors, he said.

Cicatiello gave the graduates two pieces of advice:

- “If you walk with the wise, you will be wise.”
- And he quoted Thomas Edison as saying: “Success comes to those who hustle while they wait.”

“For hustling while you wait, one thing I learned over time is that life rarely goes completely according to plan,” he said. “If things don’t turn out exactly as you thought they should, you absolutely should not walk away or give up. There is not a single successful person on the planet who didn’t work hard or make mistakes or take the wrong turn or have a moment of doubt.”

“Just remember – walk with the wise and you will become wise. Hustle while you wait and so much will come to you,” Cicatiello said.

Over 1,300 Stockton graduates received degrees in three Commencement ceremonies this week. The master’s and doctoral graduation was May 8 and Baccalaureate ceremonies were held in the morning and afternoon today.

Dr. Harvey Kesselman, provost and executive vice president of the college, gave opening remarks and called on all the mothers in the audience to stand and be recognized on Mother’s Day.

“Our students are promises we make to a future we will not see, and at this graduation, with these outstanding students, you can see that we are delivering on our promises,” said Dr. Kesselman.

He told the graduates, “It is still the case that more jobs are available for those holding a bachelor’s degree or higher than for any other degree. Indeed, New Jersey is ranked second in the nation for states creating jobs for college graduates.”

“What lies ahead of you is the delight of moving forward into a new life, but it also requires persistence, diligence, hard work, and getting along with others who may be different from you in a cosmopolitan world,” Dr. Kesselman said.

“Our future depends upon building communities of respect and honor,” he continued. “Later in this ceremony, we will continue a tradition established by our students some years ago. We will join hands and sing our alma mater. This represents the Stockton spirit that was our founding principle. The joining of hands and raising them high is a symbol of our willingness to work with one another, to join together on important issues, and to resolve problems in a positive way regardless of our differences.”

“The Stockton spirit of education and values will carry you a long way,” said Dr. Kesselman. “When you leave this graduation today, do not forget the lessons learned at Stockton in building communities, in joining hands with others who may have different backgrounds and different views. You are our hope and our best future.”

One exceptional student received three undergraduate degrees at the afternoon ceremony. Kristin M. Gummo, of Folsom, in Atlantic County, NJ said, “It wasn’t easy. I worked between 30 and 35 hours a week while consistently taking 20 credits a semester.”

Though the process took six years, she earned degrees in Business Studies, with a concentration in International Business; Political Science, with a pre-law concentration; and Language and Cultural

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Studies, with a concentration in Spanish.

Her ultimate goal is to be an international business lawyer, and in order to study in Spain as she wanted, she said she had to make her Spanish minor a major. She was already double-majoring in Political Science and Business.

As for what's next, she said, "I am in the process of applying for my MBA and after I finish that I will pursue my law degree."

"I would never have been able to complete it without the support I found not only within my family, friends, and boyfriend, but also my preceptors at Stockton and supervisors at work," Gummo said.

Dr. Rodger Jackson, professor of Philosophy and president of the Faculty Senate, told the graduates that the faculty knew they were prepared "to fight back at stupid questions" or "thinly disguised threats" from unenlightened future bosses.

"Intelligent consent is radically distinct from blind obedience," he said. "We have your back."

The student speaker was Dominick Siconolfi of Hammonton, one of two salutatorians in this ceremony. Siconolfi, who majored in Biology, and coaches Little League, will be attending medical school in the fall. Cara Puzio, of Manchester in Ocean County, and also a Biology major, shared the honor of being salutatorian with him.

Siconolfi told his classmates that he first intended to become a physical therapist, but "I found out life was more fluid than I thought and sometimes you have to go where life takes you."

He said his grandmother introduced him to an Osteopathic physician, who allowed him to shadow her and see what being a doctor entailed.

"My grandmother convinced me to go, saying that you never know what you will enjoy," he said. "This experience changed the direction of my life," he said, crediting his grandmother's persistence and the support of his family.

"I would also like to thank two professors who are here today, Dr. Ralph Werner and Dr. Karen York," Siconolfi said. "Dr. Werner helped me through the process of applying to medical school and Dr. York allowed me to do research with her during the summer of my sophomore year. I have come to realize that you never know who is going to make an impact in your life," he said.

"I will leave you with this last bit of knowledge that I received from my father: 'Life is not meant to be easy.'"

"We can take solace in the fact that our education here at Stockton has prepared us to take on these obstacles and overcome them," Siconolfi said. "Stockton has also given us the tools we need to maximize our potential; now it is up to us to use these tools to meet the potential that I know we all possess."

Valedictorian Daniel Favorito, a Geology major from Galloway, said he plans to attend the University of Arizona in the fall, working toward a master's degree in Geosciences and studying Economic Geology.

Dr. Clarence Hoover of the Board of Trustees presented Cicatiello with the college's Distinguished Service Award for "outstanding leadership as chairman and co-founder of CN Communications, and for his instrumental role as president of the Research and Development Council of New Jersey. Dr. Hoover cited Cicatiello and the council for promoting "Science, Technology, Engineering and

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Mathematics (STEM) education, research, development and innovation throughout the State of New Jersey, as well as his other significant contributions to the college, community, and State of New Jersey.

Dr. Hoover, who is retiring after 12 years on the board, was recognized for “his leadership and his profound commitment to Stockton College,” in remarks by Dr. Kesselman.

Dr. Linda Williamson Nelson, professor of Anthropology and Africana Studies and the Grand Marshal at both ceremonies, was granted the title Professor Emerita.

Student Nicholas Castillo sang the alma mater, “Our Stockton.” Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Creative Writing, and 2001 Pulitzer Prize winner for poetry, Stephen Dunn wrote the lyrics, while the music was composed by Ellen Grolman, a cellist, educator and music reviewer. Student Danielle Quinn opened the ceremony by singing the National Anthem.

Dunn, who won the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for “Different Hours,” was presented with a Doctor of Humane Letters by Dean Pappas, vice chairman of the Board of Trustees, during the morning ceremony, where he gave the commencement address.

“Thank you, I always wanted one of these,” Dr. Dunn said.

He told the graduates of the Schools of Schools of Arts and Humanities, Business, Education, General Studies and Health Sciences to persevere and to guard against losing their souls in the race for worldly success.

“The soul is character’s grid, its underpinning,” he said. ... “To be a person of high character is no small thing, but what’s at stake in the Faustian bargain is our souls. There’s no doubt that during your lifetime you will be so tested. And speaking again for myself, one’s failures can be as instructive as one’s ability to hold the moral line.”

He ended by citing a Japanese proverb: “Fall down seven times, stand up eight.”

The morning ceremony also featured a surprise for Lacey Reger, of Hammonton, NJ, whose brother flew 17 hours from Bahrain to surprise her. Zechariah Reger, a firefighter in the U.S. Coast Guard stationed in the Middle East, met his sister with roses as she came off the platform from receiving her Nursing diploma. She was speechless and hugged him with tears in her eyes.

Zechariah last saw Lacey in October. When he found out she was graduating, he called Stockton College to arrange a surprise visit. Zechariah’s mother, Jan, and father, Ross, were also surprised to find him inside the Sports Center prior to the ceremony. Lacey has been working as a nurse’s aide and plans to continue working for AtlantiCare after graduation

President Herman Saatkamp was not in attendance because of a family emergency, Dr. Kesselman explained at the beginning of the program.

Earlier in the week, Stockton’s growing graduate program held its third commencement on May 8. The college now has 14 graduate degree programs, serving over 800 students.

Lori S. Herndon, president and chief executive officer of the AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center, and executive vice president of AtlantiCare, gave the keynote address. She urged the graduates to “be positive. Believe the best is ahead and that what is good will always prevail.”

Herndon, a 1992 Stockton alumna and a member of Stockton College Foundation Board, received the college’s Distinguished Service Award.

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