

'Do Whatever Makes You Feel Alive,' AtlantiCare CEO David Tilton Tells Stockton University Master's and Doctoral Graduates

***For Immediate Release; photos on [flickr](#); graduate list attached;
Click to watch graduation [video](#)***

Thursday, May 7, 2015

**Contact:
Maryjane Briant
News and Media Relations Director
Galloway Township, NJ 08205
Maryjane.Briant@Stockton.edu
(609) 652-4593**

Galloway Township, NJ - "The deepest satisfaction of all is knowing that our short time on this earth has been well spent, and that it mattered," AtlantiCare CEO David Tilton today told the first graduating class to receive Master's and Doctoral degrees from what is now Stockton University.

Tilton, president and chief executive officer of AtlantiCare and a nationally recognized health care executive, was the commencement speaker at Stockton University's fourth Spring Master's and Doctoral commencement in the Sports Center on the main Galloway campus.

"Earning a graduate degree, as you know, requires a great deal of hard work, commitment and sacrifice," Tilton said. "You should be proud of what you've accomplished and I hope you'll take a few moments over the next few days to thank your friends and your family for their support, and to celebrate the culmination of many years of education and development.

"However, please don't think of that degree as a conclusion, but rather a beginning. It is one step, albeit a very important step, in a much longer and more profound journey," he said.

"Now since you have a master's or a doctorate in something," Tilton also said, "it might be easy to assume you know what you should do with the rest of your life.

"But I would like to challenge you, at this important crossroads, to do a gut check before you start looking for a job, joining the family business or pursuing more education."

He urged the graduates to find work that is meaningful to them.

-more-

-continued from page 1-

“One of the great ironies of life is that money and recognition are usually a result of doing meaningful work, not the other way around.” Tilton said. “Success can’t make you truly happy, but happiness very often leads to success.”

He noted that he had been fortunate to find out what he wanted to do early in life.

“I found my meaningful work by chance,” he explained. “I was lucky that at a very young age my mother encouraged me to volunteer and then work at our local hospital, serving food trays to patients and washing the pots and pans. Maybe she was hoping I’d become a doctor, but that wasn’t my calling. What did call me, though, was the nurturing health care environment and the very special people, the healers, who work in our field. My colleagues inspire me and the alignment of my interests and values with my career has made for a very meaningful life’s work.”

One of the highlights of Tilton’s career is the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award which AtlantiCare earned in 2009. Only a handful of organizations are selected by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce each year for the highest national presidential award for quality and performance excellence. As a Baldrige Award recipient, AtlantiCare is a role model for organizational management and continuous quality improvement, and Tilton serves as a national mentor of health care leaders. He currently serves on the Board of the Health Research & Educational Trust, an affiliate of the American Hospital Association (AHA), as well as on the Steering Committee of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton.

“It’s your obligation to use your unique gifts to make life better and more interesting for the rest of us. Align your purpose with what you do each day, and you will have no regrets,” Tilton said.

“Try new things, visit new places, meet new people - watch for the clues that point you to your calling, follow the direction your heart leads you, put purpose above practicality, and do whatever makes you feel alive.”

Tilton was awarded Stockton’s Distinguished Service Award by Stockton Board of Trustees Chair Mady Deininger in recognition of his national, educational and civic leadership in supporting the development of AtlantiCare as well as for his “enduring commitment to health care and healthy communities in southern New Jersey.”

Dr. Harvey Kesselman, Stockton’s Acting President, presided over the first of three commencements being held this week in the Sports Center on the university’s main Galloway campus. A total of about 1,400 graduate degrees will be conferred, including 119 Doctoral and Master’s degrees conferred today and over 1,270 degrees to be conferred at morning and afternoon ceremonies on Saturday, when noted educator, author and editor Dr. Arnold Rampersad will be the speaker.

“I am delighted to be here among these fine candidates for master’s and doctoral degrees, their families and friends,” said Acting President Kesselman. “As a graduate of Stockton myself, I am extremely proud to announce that you will be the very first to receive a degree from ‘Stockton University.’”

“Since our founding in 1969, Stockton’s mission has remained unchanged: excellence in teaching, commitment to scholarship, and dedication to service,” Acting President Kesselman

-more-

-continued from page 2-

continued. “Our new name and designation signifies Stockton’s continuing development as a distinguished institution of higher learning and reflects our growing academic programs of excellence – at the baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral levels.

“We are recognized in New Jersey -- and continue to grow regionally and nationally -- as a high-value, high-quality institution.”

Acting President Kesselman closed his introductory remarks by telling the graduates, “The Stockton spirit of education and values will carry you a long way. When you leave this graduation today, do not forget the lessons learned at Stockton in building communities, and in joining hands. You are our hope and our best future.”

Joseph M. Johnson was the student speaker and told about “the overwhelming sense of community” he has experienced since his first day as an undergraduate at Stockton, when he had just moved to New Jersey from Florida. He received his M.S. in Computational Science today, having earned a Bachelor of Science in Computational Science with a concentration in Biology in May 2013. Johnson plans to continue his studies in a doctoral program where he will be doing research in neurological systems.

“One of the greatest things about Stockton is that the support doesn’t stop after your first introduction to the University,” he said. “Day or night, weekday or weekend, there is always someone here who is willing to talk to you and help you in any way that you need. The bonds that we have formed with faculty, staff and our fellow students will last far beyond this day.

“When you leave here today, know that you bring with you all of those memories and all of those people who helped you along the way,” Johnson continued. “We face tough times in the world, but don’t let that deter you from making the most of your life. Do what you love and take time out of your day to talk and laugh with the people who matter most to you. Remember who and what got you here, and always preserve that motivation you obtained to earn this moment. We may all come from different walks of life, but we are all one Stockton family.”

Johnson, a Galloway resident who has served as a Residential Assistant at Stockton, is currently working on a model to predict retention in housing for the benefit of the Stockton community.

Dr. Kristin Jacobson, Associate Professor of Literature, was the grand marshal at the ceremony. Joseph Sramaty, a resident of Forked River who will receive a B.A. in Vocal Music from the School of Arts and Humanities on Saturday, sang both the national anthem and the alma mater, “Our Stockton.”

Dr. Susan Davenport, Interim Provost, presented the graduate degree candidates to Dr. Kesselman, and they received their hoods from Dr. Lewis Leitner, Dean of the School of Graduate and Continuing Studies. The ritual of hooding dates to medieval times, when distinctive hoods and gowns first distinguished between academic levels and also kept scholars warm in drafty universities.

Stockton awarded degrees in 14 graduate programs today in the university’s fourth spring graduation ceremony for Master’s and Doctoral graduates. The growing graduate program awarded its first degrees in 1999 with a Master’s in Business Studies, and the first doctoral program, in Physical Therapy, was approved in 2006.

#