

Bristol Community College's 52nd Commencement Ceremony takes a fresh approach

Sustainability was the theme at Bristol Community College's 52nd Commencement Ceremony held on June 1, 2019, in a new location under the solar canopy on the Bristol Community College Fall River Campus. Bristol welcomed Carolyn Heeps, Ph.D. as this year's commencement speaker. Dr. Heeps is the head of renewables, North America at Lloyd's Register and received recognition in the 2017 *100 Women in Wind* report. Dr. Heeps has more than 35 years of experience in the marine sciences and industry sector, including 18 years in the marine renewable energy sector with a focus on offshore wind. Since joining Lloyd's Register in June 2018, Dr. Heeps has expanded Lloyd's Register's service provision in North America, focusing on the needs of the supply chain, development services and workforce development.

Mayor Jon Mitchell offered greetings from the City in the representation of the four mayors from the communities that Bristol serves— New Bedford, Attleboro, Fall River and Taunton. Bristol and the City of New Bedford have been working closely together to position New Bedford as the epicenter of the new offshore wind industry including Bristol's development of a National Offshore Wind Institute that will offer the basic and advanced safety and technical training programs that are required for careers in offshore wind.

Hosting the ceremony under the innovative solar canopy also opened up new advantages to the yearly celebration including increased guest seating and greater accessibility for attendees in wheelchairs or other aids, due to the location's smooth asphalt surface and a more centralized location, with closer access to restrooms and the post-event reception.

As one of the largest community college graduating classes in Massachusetts, Bristol awarded approximately 1,300 degrees and certificates including degrees in associate in science, associate in arts, and associate in applied science. Certificates of achievement were also awarded. Academic achievement with cum laude, magna cum laude, and summa cum laude designations was recognized. Graduates from all Bristol Community College locations attended including the Attleboro campus, Fall River campus, New Bedford campus and Taunton center.

The following prestigious awards were also presented during the Commencement ceremony:

DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN AWARD

The Distinguished Citizen Award is presented annually to an outstanding local citizen whose character and achievements have enriched the life of the community, or to an individual who has made distinguished contributions in the fields of health, education, business, industry, labor, government or the arts. **This year, the Distinguished Citizen Award was presented to President and CEO of BayCoast Bank Nicholas M. Christ.**

Nicholas M. Christ is the President and CEO of BayCoast Bank, a community bank serving South Coast Massachusetts and Rhode Island, offering a wide range of financial services. Christ joined BayCoast Bank in 1985 as Senior Vice President & Financial Officer. Today, with more than 40 years of experience in the financial services industry, Christ has led the development of BayCoast Bank into a leading banking and lending institution in the region. He holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Babson College and a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from Boston College.

As an active member of the community, Christ serves on the board of the Bristol County Chamber of Commerce, SSTAR Campaign Steering Committee and co-chairs the City of Fall River's Task Force to End Homelessness, as well as the SouthCoast Development Partnership.

As a determined advocate of education, Christ supports local schools and encourages business communities to take an active role in the education of students. In addition to serving on various school advisory boards, Christ chairs the Bristol County Chamber Education Committee, whose *edUp* campaign encourages the South Coast region to recognize the importance of education as a crucial component of the region's future economic prosperity. Most recently, the *edUp* campaign and BayCoast Bank jointly launched the innovative *Get on the Bus* initiative, aimed at making education a top priority for the region, utilizing a reimagined bus that travels the region collecting stories about how education has positively impacted the lives of people in our communities.

HONORARY ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN HUMAN LETTERS

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education has granted Bristol Community College the right to award honorary associate degrees in humane letters. The College awards these degrees to individuals who illustrate, through a career of intellect and service, the best of Bristol Community College's vision – to change the world, learner by learner. **This year's recipient is retired Senior Vice President and Senior Trust Officer at BayCoast Bank (formerly Citizens Union Savings Bank) and community supporter Zelma A. Braga.**

A commitment to public service has been a central part of Braga's life and legacy. She has played a prominent role in so many ways in our community. She is known for her leadership and service in many organizations in the Fall River area including the Historical Society, United Way, the Rotary Club and the Marine Museum. Most notably, serving on the St. Anne's Hospital Board of Trustees and as a director of the Family Service Association of Greater Fall River, just to name a few. She was named the Roger Valcourt Memorial Outstanding Citizen of the Year in 2009 by the Bristol County Chamber of Commerce and in 2007 received the Good Scout award from the Massasoit District Narragansett Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Bristol Community College has been a grateful benefactor of Braga's thoughtful leadership, dedication and generosity for many years. She served on Bristol's Foundation Board from 1989 to 2001 and was president from 1997 to 1999. She also served on the college's Board of Trustees from 2002 to 2012. Her leadership was instrumental in the dedication of the Margaret L. Jackson Arts Center. What's more, the endowed scholarship she established with Bristol has put a college education within reach for so many of the college's students.

After a banking career spanning more than 40 years, she retired in 2000. She studied estate planning at Harvard Law School and was named a Distinguished Alumni from her alma mater, Durfee High School, in 2017.

VALEDICTORIAN AND SALUTATORIAN

This year's Valedictorian is Dawn M. Lopes, of New Bedford, Human Services, and the Salutatorian is Amanda M. DaCosta, of New Bedford, Clinical Laboratory Science.

Dawn Lopes, of New Bedford, Class of 2019 Valedictorian, began at Bristol determined to achieve her personal best, both inside and outside of the classroom. In addition to her outstanding academic standing at the college, Dawn has bettered her community in several ways, including previously serving as a tutor at Bristol's *Learning Commons* and board member for *Dream Out Loud Center for the Arts*, a nonprofit organization in New Bedford that teaches youth how to turn their hobbies into careers.

Dawn has served as an AmeriCorps Teacher at *Our Sisters' School*, an independent school for girls from the Greater New Bedford area that educates and inspires girls to reach their full potential. She is also a graduate of the *Mass Humanities* initiative, the *Clemente Course in the Humanities*, which empowers students to further their education and careers, become effective advocates and engage actively in the cultural and political lives of their communities. Socially, Dawn enjoys engaging others by performing poetry and has even hosted writing workshops. Following Commencement, she plans to continue her education at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth to earn her degree in writing, rhetoric and communication, before pursuing her goal of becoming a screenwriter and novelist.

Amanda M. DaCosta, of New Bedford, Class of 2019 Salutatorian, fully immersed herself in the *Bristol Experience* by combining her academic interests with extracurricular activities. In addition to her outstanding academic record in the clinical laboratory science program, Amanda held the role of president of the clinical laboratory science club and supplemental instructor and tutor for the college's phlebotomy program.

As a first-generation college graduate, Amanda is both appreciative and humble in regard to her achievements. She graciously attributes the support of her family, the college and fellow classmates to her positive attitude and success. Following Commencement, Amanda will begin working as a microbiologist at *US Laboratories*, in Brockton, MA, where she has secured employment. Amanda has ambitions of continuing her education through a master's degree with the goal of becoming a microbiology instructor at a college or university.

THE LAST LECTURE

The Last Lecture is a faculty honor created by the Bristol Student Senate. The award honors one

exemplary faculty member who has affected students' education and their lives in significant ways. **Donald Kilguss, Jr., associate professor in history** was selected by students to deliver the Last Lecture.

Since he joined the college in 1999, Professor Kilguss has developed a reputation for his unwavering commitment to student success and support, often going beyond the call of duty to engage his students. He received a Bachelor's of Arts in history from Providence College and a Master of Arts in history from the University of Rhode Island. Professor Kilguss has been the recipient of several awards at the college including the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence Award in 2012, the Massachusetts Colleges Online (MCO) Course of Distinction Award in 2018 and the Phi Theta Kappa Distinguished Service Award in 2019. Professor Kilguss instructs both history and government courses at the college.

During the ceremony, the college acknowledged the appointment of three retired faculty members as Professor Emeriti. This award recognizes retired members of the faculty chosen by their peers for excellence in teaching and community service. **This year there are three appointments: Yanjun Chen, Professor Emerita of Mathematics; Cecil Leonard, Professor Emeritus of Business and Marlene Pollock, Professor Emerita of History.**

For more information on the awardees, speeches and citations please visit <http://www.bristolcc.edu/commencement>.

About Bristol Community College

Bristol Community College is a leading resource for education and workforce development in Southeastern Massachusetts. Bristol has locations in Fall River, Attleboro, New Bedford, and Taunton, along with flexible online offerings that lead to an associate degree, a career ready certificate, or the ability to seamlessly transfer to baccalaureate colleges throughout the state and country. The college's Center for Workforce and Community Education provides customized training for businesses and the community including healthcare, workforce and sustainable initiatives, and corporate services. The Bristol Community College Foundation, a nonprofit organization utilizing community donations and partnerships, supports the college's mission to meet the lifelong educational needs of the community. For more information, [visit bristolcc.edu](http://www.bristolcc.edu).