

Commencement

June 7, 2025

[Welcome]

Please be seated.

Good afternoon.

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Community College of Vermont's 2025 commencement ceremony.

My name is Joyce Judy, and I serve as president of CCV.

I have the distinct honor of greeting you today as we celebrate the Class of 2025.

Congratulations, graduates.

[Platform Party]

We are privileged to be joined on the platform today by:

- Vermont Governor Phil Scott
- Our keynote speaker, Sara Byers
- Vermont State Colleges Chancellor Elizabeth Mauch

- Vermont State Colleges Trustee:
 - Megan Cluver

Also joining us on the platform are:

- This year's community service award recipient Scott Giles
- The Class of 2025's student speakers, Samantha Greene and Thomas Huster
- CCV staff members Amanda Bates and Cody Miller
- CCV faculty members Sean Dobbin and Ananda Forest
- CCV dean of strategic initiatives and student affairs, Heather Weinstein
- And CCV's academic dean, Debby Stewart

[Acknowledgements]

I would like to acknowledge the state senators and representatives from districts throughout Vermont who are joining us in the audience. Thank you for being here to celebrate your constituents and CCV's Class of 2025.

I also want to thank the staff members at both CCV and Norwich University who did all of the behind-the-scenes work to prepare this special occasion. We truly appreciated your efforts.

[Message to Graduates]

Graduates. Let's begin by taking a moment to look back at what you have accomplished to arrive here today.

- With everything else going on in your lives, you made time to set your goals, choose your programs, roll up your sleeves, and complete your course requirements.
- This afternoon, you will receive the college degrees that you have earned.
- Everyone in this field house is here for one reason: to celebrate your achievements.
- Congratulations.

Let me tell you a little bit about your graduating class.

- Altogether, there are 500 of you.
- You come from all walks of life, from across Vermont, and around the world.
 - You hail from all 14 Vermont counties.
 - From 11 different states in the nation.
 - And from 19 different countries, many of you adopting new languages and sharing your rich cultures as you pursued your educational goals here in Vermont.
- The oldest member of your graduating class is 64, and the youngest is 18.

62% of you are members of the first generation in your families to hold a college degree.

- Your families are incredibly proud of you, and we join them in celebrating you today.
- Will all first-generation college graduates please stand and be recognized?

42 of you are Veterans and military connected students.

- You were called to something bigger than yourselves, and you served our nation with honor.
- Many of you took online classes during your deployment.
- Many of you came to CCV as a next step in returning to civilian life.

- And many of you have helped support your fellow veterans as they adapted to life as college students.
- I know I speak for everyone here when I say thank you to you and your families for your service to our country and I would like to ask our graduating veterans and active members of the military to stand and be recognized.

Thank you.

Graduates, you have traveled far to arrive here today, but I suspect that not one of you would say that you got here without the support of the people in this room, and many others, who have helped you on your journey.

- Your instructors offered their expertise and encouragement, challenging you to grow as learners and as people.
- CCV advisors and other staff members guided you along your path to defining and meeting your goals.
- And your family and friends gave you motivation, love, and support all along the way.

Graduates, I invite you to stand, turn around, and join me in thanking all of them.

As you hear your name read over the public address system and walk across the stage to receive your diplomas this afternoon, you will join the 16,000 people who have graduated from CCV since our founding in 1970.

The graduates who sat in your chairs 2, 5, 10 years ago have gone on to make lasting contributions to their communities and their professions, here in Vermont and around the world.

They have pursued all kinds of careers, in business, healthcare, education, social services, information technology, public safety, and the arts and sciences.

They have supported their families, helped fuel our economy, made our world a safer place, and helped others build better lives.

Let me share a few of their stories.

Graduate Sophie Decker started taking CCV courses while still in high school. After completing her degree, she transferred to UVM, and is now a lead preschool teacher in Burlington, an occupation that is in very high demand, serving Vermont kids and parents.

Taylor Yeates always wanted to be a veterinarian, but never really thought it was possible. After starting his education at CCV, he set off on the path to earn his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree and is now an acute care veterinarian.

Rebecca Hanley was a single mom when she came to CCV, determined to finish the college education she had started years earlier. She discovered a passion for information technology and is now a systems engineer at Middlebury College, making a secure living for her family and helping support the students and information systems of one of Vermont's leading institutions.

When he was in his forties, Scott Lamberti made a career change. Since he became a father, Scott thought about becoming a nurse—but that was not a typical choice for a guy his age. He eventually made his way to CCV and went on for his nursing degree. He is now a labor and delivery nurse at Copley Hospital, caring for moms, babies, and families. He told us, *“This is where I should be; it’s who I am.”*

Calvin Caswell worked in the trades for a decade after high school and dreamed of running his own business. After he completed his associate degree, he took ownership of and now runs his own home inspection company, supporting the needs of homeowners, home buyers, and the real estate industry in Vermont.

Thato Ratsebe earned degrees from CCV and St. Michael's College before taking on the role of *Associate Director and Programs Manager* at the Association for Africans Living in

Vermont. She now helps new Americans gain independence and settle into their Vermont communities.

Mohamed Basha first took CCV classes during high school. After completing his degree, he transferred to Castleton's nursing program. In 2006, after seeing how challenging it was for a friend of his to find nursing support for his mother, he started TLC Nursing as a one-man operation. Today, TLC Nursing is a multi-state healthcare staffing provider, based in Vermont, that employs thousands.

These stories show how just a few of your fellow alums followed their dreams. It wasn't easy for any of them, but they persisted. Most importantly, they found success by choosing the path that was right for them.

This week, people are probably asking you the familiar question, *What are you going to do now?* Even if you have an easy answer for this – you have a job you enjoy, or you are transferring on for a four-year degree - your graduation today still represents the closing of one chapter in your life and the beginning of another.

As your next chapter unfolds, I would like to ask you to keep something important in mind: *Vermont needs you.* We need your good thinking, your expertise, and your leadership. There are countless opportunities for you to make a meaningful difference – and make a good living – here in Vermont, just as the thousands of CCV alumni who have come before you have done.

Whatever you decide to dedicate your time and energy to – whether it is owning your own business, teaching in a classroom, running IT systems, providing healthcare, becoming an engineer, a graphic designer, a manufacturing technician, or practicing law – go forward with confidence.

Every one of you has already shown that you have the skills and the resolve to reach your goals, no matter what unexpected challenges may arise. You will not only enrich your families and your places of employment, but you will also contribute to the life of your communities and the state we call home. We know you will inspire many others along the way, as you inspire us today.

Graduates, everyone here today is proud to be part of your journey.

On behalf of the CCV community, I heartily congratulate you. We look forward to hearing your stories as you embrace your future and find your way.

[Governor Scott]

It is a point of pride for CCV that in every year of his tenure, Vermont Governor Phil Scott has attended CCV's commencement.

As we welcome the Governor this year, I would like to express our gratitude for his work making higher education more accessible and affordable for all Vermonters.

At this time, I would like to invite the Governor of the State of Vermont, Phil Scott, to the podium to greet and congratulate the class of 2025. Governor Scott.

[Community Service Award]

I would like to invite Scott Giles to join me at the podium.

Helping Vermont build stronger communities is a major goal in our work at CCV. Each year at commencement, we present the Community Service Award in recognition of sustained and profound service to our state.

This year it is my distinct privilege to present this award to Scott Giles.

Scott is a champion of CCV's mission to help Vermonters access higher education. He believes in the power of education to improve lives and provide the skills and knowledge people need for Vermont's most promising jobs.

As President and CEO of the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, or VSAC, Scott is one of CCV's most longstanding and valued partners.

He is a tireless advocate for students and their families, and the impacts of his leadership are felt widely across Vermont.

He and his team created the hugely successful 802 Opportunity Grant, which provides free CCV tuition to eligible Vermonters.

Scott, this award is a symbol of our appreciation for your partnership with CCV and your service to Vermont.

We are so proud to call you, our friend.

It is my privilege to present you with the 2025 Community Service Award.

[Student Leadership Award]

Will Harriet Wiringiye (Wee ree–ngee-yay) and Amelia-Hope Porpeggia (Pour-peg-lia) please come forward and join me at the podium?

Many students become leaders in our academic centers during their time at CCV, helping create an engaged and supportive learning environment for others, and often serving as a resource for their fellow students.

Each year, we present the Student Leadership Award to two students from the graduating class in recognition of their many contributions to their classmates and to the CCV community.

It is my pleasure to present the 2025 Student Leadership Award to Harriet Wiringiye (Wee-ree-ngee-yay) and Amelia-Hope Porpeggia (Pour-peg-lia).

Harriet came to CCV in fall of 2020 and balanced her CCV course work with parenting and her full-time job in healthcare. She brought humor, grace, and passion for learning to her classes and fellow students. She graduates today with an associate degree in health science and a pharmacy technician certificate.

Amelia-Hope is a dedicated student who became more involved at CCV through the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. In 2024, she was elected PTK Chapter President by her peers. Amelia-Hope has brought thoughtfulness and kindness to her role as she worked with her peers to build an improved CCV experience for all students.

Congratulations, Harriet and Amelia-Hope, on receiving the 2025 Student Leadership Award.

[Alumni Scholarship]

Will Jeetan Khadka (GEE-tawn COD-ca) and Tamara Hernandez please come forward and join me at the podium?

Every year, with the generous support from CCV Alumni, we award the Alumni Scholarship to graduates who plan to continue their education at a four-year college.

This year, we are proud to award the alumni scholarship to Jeetan Khadka and Tamara Hernandez.

Jeetan is from our Winooski academic center, and he graduates today with a degree in behavioral science. He will pursue a bachelor's degree in psychology at Vermont State University.

Tamara studied at our Upper Valley academic center and is graduating with her associate degree in liberal studies. She will continue her education at the University of New Hampshire, where she will pursue a degree in business management with a minor in accounting.

Congratulations, Jeetan and Tamara, on receiving the 2025 Alumni Scholarship.

[Teaching Excellence Awards]

Each year, we present the Teaching Excellence Award to three faculty members. The nominations for this award come primarily from CCV students.

The 2025 Teaching Excellence Award recipients are E. Scott Frost, Sean Dobbin, and Ananda Forest.

Will Sean Dobbin and Ananda Forest please join me at the podium?

Unfortunately, Scott Frost is not able to join us today, but I would like to take a moment to acknowledge his work.

A retired surgeon, Scott brings deep knowledge in the field of healthcare to his classes. He credits his students' strong interest in learning as his motivation for teaching, and he empowers them to be the best professionals they can be. One of the students who nominated Scott for this award wrote, "He finds a way to help each student feel like they are his only student. He makes you feel as if he has all the confidence in the world in you."

Sean Dobbin has been a CCV instructor for close to ten years, teaching English Composition and Dimensions of Self & Society. He says that teaching is one of the most rewarding parts of his life. He wants the students in his classes to "feel like they can do anything." The students who nominated Sean described him as, "very helpful, kind, and

thoughtful,” and one shared that they were taking a second class with Sean so they could, “expand and learn even more from his great knowledge and teaching.”

Ananda Forest started teaching Native American History and Culture at CCV in 2005. A writer, anthropologist, and natural historian, Ananda brings joy and enthusiasm to his CCV classrooms. As one of his students wrote, “This professor opened my eyes, full stop. There is passion in his voice when he teaches, bringing students into the learning.”

Congratulations to Scott, Sean, and Ananda. We honor you today for your commitment to teaching and learning excellence, and for the many ways in which you encourage and inspire your students.

[Student Speakers]

Graduates, we now have the privilege of being joined by two members of the Class of 2025 to address us today as your student speakers.

I would like to invite academic advisor Cody Miller to introduce the first student speaker for the Class of 2025, Samantha Greene.

<Samantha’s Speech>

I now would like to invite former CCV-Bennington senior administrative assistant Amanda Bates to introduce the second student speaker for the Class of 2025, Thomas Huster.

<Thomas’s Speech>

[Keynote Address]

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce our keynote speaker, Sara Byers.

One of the first things I noticed when meeting Sara was that she has a genuine passion for Vermont and the people who live here.

In addition to her role as CEO of her family's business, Leonardo's Pizza, which has locations in Vermont and Maine, Sara has served on the board of multiple organizations, including Lund, the Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce, the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, and she currently serves as chair of the board of trustees of Champlain College. She is also a published poet who is fascinated by the complexities of everyday life.

Sara is incredibly humble about her many achievements, and she describes the work of leading her family's business as both a privilege and an honor.

She believes in connection and in giving back, and she is deeply committed to lifting up those around her.

At a time when we are easily divided, Sara's outlook on life is refreshing. At the end of the day, she says, no matter who we are or what we're doing, we are in this world together.

We are so pleased to have her joining us here today to address the CCV graduating Class of 2025.

Please join me in welcoming Sara Byers.

[PTK]

2025 marks the 10th anniversary of CCV's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international honor society for community college students.

Phi Theta Kappa recognizes students who demonstrate academic integrity and excellence.

As the graduates entered the field house this afternoon, you likely noticed that some are wearing gold and blue stoles around their necks. These represent their membership in PTK and their high level of academic achievement at CCV.

I would like to ask our Phi Theta Kappa graduates to stand at this time to be recognized.

[Presentation of Class]

Graduates, it is now time to turn our attention to the moment you have been waiting for: the awarding of your degrees.

CCV has a long-standing tradition that you will share in today. As you leave the platform after receiving your diplomas, CCV staff members will present you with a red carnation. This flower serves as a long-standing CCV symbol of the many people in your lives who have helped you reach this day.

At this time, I would like to ask Heather Weinstein, dean of strategic initiatives and student affairs, to join me at the podium to present the Class of 2025.

Heather:

President Judy, it is my pleasure to present the CCV graduating class of 2025—all of whom have successfully completed the requirements for the Associate Degree or the Associate in Applied Science Degree.

By the authority vested in the Community College of Vermont by the Board of Trustees of the Vermont State Colleges, I confer upon you, the Class of 2025, the associate degree.

Will the graduates from BENNINGTON please stand and come to this end of the stage.

I ask that graduates from all other centers stay seated until they are invited to come forward by the ushers.

[Recessional]

Now, graduates, if you would please direct your attention to the front of the main aisle.?

Your student speakers Samantha Greene and Thomas Huster will lead you in moving their tassels from right to left, signifying your transition from student to graduate.

Congratulations, Class of 2025.

We are proud of all that you have accomplished, and we look forward to hearing about the many achievements you will have as you go forward, empowered by the confidence and wisdom that you have gained in your time at CCV.

The group on the platform will lead the graduates out. I ask the audience to remain seated until the graduates have completed their recessional.

Thank you.