

Commencement

June 1, 2024

[Welcome]

Please be seated.

Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Community College of Vermont's 2024 commencement ceremony. I am Joyce Judy, and I serve as president of CCV. I have the distinct honor of greeting you today to celebrate the Class of 2024. Congratulations, graduates.

It is a privilege to be joined on the platform by Vermont Governor Phil Scott; today's keynote speaker, Aly Richards; and Vermont State Colleges Board members, chair Lynn Dickinson and trustees David Durfee, Shirley Jefferson, Marc Mihaly, and Sue Zeller.

I'm pleased to also be joined by Peter Smith, CCV's founding president; Tim Donovan, former chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges and former president of CCV; and Barbara Benedict, president of the J. Warren and Lois McClure Foundation.

Also joining me on the platform are this year's community service award recipients Susan and Bob Titterton; the Class of 2024's student speaker, Caitlin McGinley; coordinator of student advising MK Dreher; faculty members Heath Fuller and Norm Whittle; and academic dean Debby Stewart.

[Acknowledgements]

Graduates, as you look around the field house this afternoon, you'll see many of the faculty and staff members who supported you during your time at CCV. Your instructors offered their expertise and encouragement, challenging you to grow as learners and as people. CCV staff guided you along the path to meeting your goals. They join us today to celebrate you and your many achievements. Graduates, please join me in thanking them.

Earlier today, some of you may have heard the bell concert performed from the University's bell tower by George Matthew, Jr. We thank him for generously sharing his time today.

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 CCV's Class of 2024.

I also want to thank the CCV staff, as well as the staff here at Norwich University, who organized today's event. We appreciate the effort that went into creating this special occasion in honor of our graduates and their achievements.

[Message to Graduates]

To the CCV Class of 2024: Congratulations! You did it. You have finally reached your goal of earning a college degree.

Today, it is important to appreciate the drive and determination that helped you reach this milestone. Think back to when you were just starting out at CCV. It took guts to walk through our doors. What inspired you to take that leap of faith? What was your north star? What kept you going when you wanted to give up?

For most of you, I imagine there was a simple but powerful desire to prove to yourself that you could do it. Maybe you aspired to earn a college degree because you know it can lead to a meaningful career. Some of you likely wanted to set a positive example for your kids. Others were committed to finishing something you started long ago. Whatever your motivation, you kept going despite the doubts, the fears, and the hard work. Your drive and determination have brought you a long way. Where will those qualities take you next?

Many of you will pursue careers in healthcare. You've worked as a medical assistant, LNA, or LPN, and maybe you plan to continue in the field of nursing, respiratory therapy, or beyond. Your generosity and compassion to help people in their most vulnerable moments is inspiring, and you play a critical role in Vermont's workforce.

Others will continue to grow their skills in the field of information technology. As web developers, cybersecurity professionals, IT specialists, and more, your expertise is needed in every sector, from manufacturing to healthcare. We will look to you to make the digital world safer and more innovative.

For dozens of you, education is your calling. You want to give Vermont students a strong start, supporting their growth and development and equipping them with the tools to succeed. Whether you work as an early childhood educator, paraprofessional, special educator, or classroom teacher, your knowledge and enthusiasm will impact countless students.

Some of you are part of Vermont's small business community. As accountants or bookkeepers, contractors or entrepreneurs, you have the technical, leadership, and visionary skills to provide valuable products and services to our state. You will use your CCV education to create a more vibrant, resilient economy.

Still others will work to bring about environmental and social justice. You aspire to make the world more equitable, and to make your communities more inclusive. If you plan to be involved in efforts to fight climate change, advocate for LGBTQ+ communities, help Vermonters who are housing or food insecure, or any number of related issues, we thank you for your dedication.

And many of you are looking forward to continuing your education and earning your bachelor's degree. You came to CCV to get a strong start, and you are ready to further your academic journey to continue honing your skills, expanding your knowledge, and preparing for your unique role in the workforce.

Graduates, you are a remarkable group of talented, driven people. You are motivated by a desire to help others, to make a difference for your families, to make the world a better place. You aspired to earn the skills and knowledge you will need to be a force for good. Your drive and determination helped you reach this milestone today, and I hope you will lean into those qualities as you work to improve the quality of life in Vermont and beyond. Congratulations, CCV Class of 2024!

<Pause>

[Governor Scott]

It is a point of pride for CCV that each year of his tenure as Governor, Phil Scott makes it a priority to attend our commencement. As we welcome the Governor this year, I would like to acknowledge our gratitude for his partnership in working to make higher education more 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 2024. Governor Scott.

[Service Awards]

At CCV, a major focus of our work is on building stronger communities. We encourage students, faculty, and staff to become more involved citizens, and each year at commencement, we honor individuals who have given their time and energy in service to others.

[Community Service Award]

I would like to invite Susan and Bob Titterton to join me at the podium.

The Community Service Award is presented each year in recognition of sustained and profound service to our state. This year it is my distinct privilege to present this award to Susan and Bob Titterton.

Susan and Bob represent the best of what it means to be a Vermonter: they are selfless, humble, and dedicated to making Vermont a better place to live. Both had successful careers as educators, and they are active in local and statewide initiatives. They have been involved in projects close to home, such as the Morrisville Food Co-op, and they are leaders in the effort to improve Vermont's child care system, with a particular focus on empowering the early childhood

education workforce. The Tittertons generously support CCV scholarships for early childhood educators, and Susan plays a key role in a statewide initiative to establish early childhood education as a recognized profession. Together, in their understated and unpretentious style, they have impacted the lives of countless students, educators, and community members.

Susan and Bob, we are grateful for your service to Vermont. It is an honor to present you both with this award.

[Give plaque; pause for photo]

[Student Leadership Award]

Many students are leaders in their CCV centers, serving as resources for fellow students and working to create a vibrant, supportive learning environment.

This year, we are very pleased to present the Student Leadership Award to Talyn [Tă-lon; sounds like Talon] Brown-Wolf and Elizabeth Robinson. Will Talyn and Elizabeth please join me at the podium?

[Begin reading as they come forward]

Throughout his time at CCV, Talyn modeled leadership: he served as a work-study student and as a peer mentor, and strived to make everyone around him feel safe, welcome, and included. Outside of CCV, he volunteered at Montpelier's North Branch Nature Center, and will soon begin a volunteer position at the Rainbow Bridge Community Center. He was recognized for his outstanding leadership with CCV's 2023 Leadership Scholarship. Talyn graduates today

with a degree in STEM studies, and will continue his education at UVM to pursue a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology.

Elizabeth Robinson came back to college as an adult student because she wanted to gain the skills she needed to make a career change. At CCV, she has been a role model for students, faculty, and staff alike. She has excelled in her academic pursuits and has served in leadership roles on CCV's chapter of the national honor society Phi Theta Kappa and on the Student Advisory and Leadership Council. She graduates today with a degree in liberal studies and will continue her academic journey at Vermont State University, where she plans to study environmental science.

Congratulations, Talyn and Elizabeth, on receiving this year's Student Leadership Award.

[Give plaque; pause for photo]

[Alumni Scholarship]

Graduates, today you become CCV alumni. In that role, you will always be members of the CCV community. With generous support from past graduates, every year 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 Fathima [FAH-thima] Babu [Ba-boo] and Kaitlyn Masson [Mass-in]. Will Fathima and Kaitlyn please join me at the podium?

[Begin reading while they walk]

Fathima graduates today from our Winooski academic center with a degree in design and media studies. She will pursue a bachelor's degree in graphic design and visual communication at Champlain College.

Kaitlyn studied at our Newport academic center and earns her associate degree in behavioral science. She will continue her education at the University of New England, where she will pursue a degree in social work.

Congratulations, Fathima and Kaitlyn, on receiving the 2024 Alumni Scholarship.

[Give certificates; pause for photos]

[Teaching Excellence Awards]

The Teaching Excellence Awards are given annually to faculty members who have been nominated by students, faculty, and staff, with the vast majority of nominations coming from students. This year's Teaching Excellence Award recipients are Heath Fuller, Gail Marlene Schwartz, and Norm Whittle.

Unfortunately, Gail is not able to join us today, but I would like to take a moment to acknowledge her work. In addition to her role as a CCV faculty member, Gail is a writer, professional copywriter, and editing consultant. She says that teaching at CCV is "a life's mission." In nominating Gail for this award, a student wrote, "During our last class, many agreed that without Gail, they would not have finished the semester...Gail took our classroom and created a community."

Will Heath and Norm please join me at the podium?

Heath Fuller has taught in the humanities and social sciences for the past seven years. Heath loves teaching at CCV because of the focus on students and their success, and says “my students should get teaching excellence awards too—I wouldn’t be the teacher I am without them.” As one student wrote, Heath “is so full of life and happiness, and she knows how to pass it on to the class environment...She just wants us to succeed.”

Norm Whittle has been an educator for more than 30 years, both at CCV and at a local high school. Like Heath and Gail, Norm is devoted to his students. As he says, “I go out of my way for any student that wants help.” One student shared that “Norm’s major goal is to assist every student in every way, to do everything he can for the student to be successful.”

Congratulations to Heath, Gail, and Norm. We thank you for your commitment to teaching and learning excellence, and for the many ways in which you encourage CCV students in your classrooms.

[Student Speaker]

We are fortunate to be joined this afternoon by Barbara Benedict, president of the J. Warren and Lois McClure Foundation. The McClure Foundation shares CCV’s mission to help all Vermonters access postsecondary education and training. Most recently, the Foundation has supported the Free Degree Promise, which builds on the state’s Early College program to allow students to complete a free associate degree the year after high school graduation. Today, we celebrate the second cohort of students to graduate from this program, and this year’s student speaker happens to be a graduate of the Free Degree Promise.

And now to the student speaker. I would like to invite academic advisor MK Dreher to introduce the student speaker for the Class of 2024, Caitlin McGinley.

[Give plaque to Caitlin; pause for photo]

[Keynote Address]

At this time, I am pleased to introduce our keynote speaker, Aly Richards.

Aly has had a remarkable journey from a small town in Vermont to an impressive career in public service, with a particular focus on education. She grew up in Newbury, Vermont and became one of the first students to serve on the state board of education. She has served on the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees and is currently the vice chair of the UVM Medical Center Board of Trustees. Aly is a fierce advocate for Vermont and our state's future in her current role as CEO of Let's Grow Kids, Vermont's campaign to ensure equitable access to high-quality, affordable child care for all Vermont children, and her leadership and vision resulted in the passage of Vermont's historic child care law last year which made our state a national leader in early childhood education. Aly is deeply committed to Vermont, and to making sure that Vermont's children and families can thrive. We are so fortunate to have her here today to address the Class of 2024. Aly.

[PTK]

2024 marks the ninth year of the CCV chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international honor society for community college students who demonstrate academic integrity and excellence. You likely noticed when these students entered the field house that they are wearing yellow stoles,

which symbolize their membership in PTK. Will all graduating members of Phi Theta Kappa stand at this time to be recognized?

[Veterans]

Several members of the Class of 2024 deserve special recognition for their service in the United States Military. They have made sacrifices that few of us can imagine, and they have served with honor, displaying unwavering courage, integrity, and commitment. Will all veterans and military graduates please stand and be recognized? We thank you for your service to this country.

[Presentation of Class]

It is now time to turn our attention to the moment you have been waiting for: the awarding of your degrees. The many people who have helped you reach this moment are here in the audience to celebrate your achievement. I ask the families, friends, and supporters of our graduates to rise. Graduates, please join me in thanking them.

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 is a symbol of the many people in your lives who have helped you reach this day.

Now, Academic Dean Debby Stewart will present the class of 2024.

Debby:

“President Judy, it is my pleasure to present the CCV graduating class of 2024—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 2024, the associate degree.

Will the graduates from BENNINGTON please stand and come to this end of the stage [POINT LEFT].

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

[Marianne continues to read names from the lectern]

[Recessional]

Now, graduates, if you would please direct your attention to the front of the main aisle. Caitlin, please lead your class in moving their tassels from right to left.

[Right to Left]

Congratulations to the class of 2024. We are proud that CCV has been a part of your journey, and we hope that you will take the time to enjoy and celebrate this moment. As you move on to new chapters, we trust that you will continue to call on your own unique qualities, as well as what you have learned here, to build stronger, more resilient, and more inclusive communities wherever you go.

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.