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President Higdon's 2008 Commencement Address

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Connecticut College 90th Commencement
May 18, 2008
President's Remarks
Leo I. Higdon Jr.

Good morning. To all of our graduates, parents and families, trustees, faculty, staff and honored guests: Welcome. Today's program includes remarks and performances by several of our graduating seniors, a presentation of the College medal to a special alumna and we will award an honorary degree to our keynote speaker Tavis Smiley.

Now, I'd like to ask all of the graduates to stand and recognize those whose support made it possible for them to be here today – your parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends. So graduates, let's stand now, and show our appreciation. Thank you, please be seated.

I'd like to add my own thanks to all of the parents and supporters here today. These graduating seniors are a very special group. I want to thank you for entrusting them to us. Connecticut College provides a liberal arts education that is distinctive, personal and far-reaching. Your students are leaving here today with an education they can be very, very proud of.

And you, our seniors, you are graduating at an important point in Connecticut College's history.

You've witnessed improvements to this campus, and you've seen new initiatives implemented to enhance academics and support students on financial aid.

This class has excelled in many venues: athletics fields, arts exhibitions, theater productions – just to name a few... I've seen this excellence in your dedication to environmental sustainability and stewardship of our planet. I've seen it with your passion around equity, diversity and inclusiveness and how we define this community. The success of your class this year also resulted in a very impressive number of post-graduate awards, including Fulbrights.

I know that, as alumni, your support for the College will be strong. As you transition into being graduates of Connecticut College, I want to thank you for setting the bar so high with respect to the senior giving program. You reached 96-percent participation – a record for any College class, and a testament to your engagement in the life of Connecticut College.

Together, as a class – and as individuals – you have impressed me with your intelligence and your talents. You have also shown me your compassion and your integrity.

Here at Connecticut College, you've engaged yourselves in the world around you – through community service here in New London and across the world. I encourage you to continue to pursue your passions in ways that help make the world a better place.

Here at Connecticut College, your liberal arts education has helped you see new connections across traditional disciplines, and challenged you to make new choices. I encourage you continue to challenge yourselves. Forge new paths and make new connections at every fork in the road.

Here at Connecticut College, you have been a vital part of a dynamic and increasingly diverse community. I encourage you to continue to be active citizens in whatever communities you call home. And continue to value diversity as an important component of your life-long learning.

Here at Connecticut College, you have lived with an Honor Code that has guided your actions and given you a strong sense of control as you faced new situations and made new choices. I encourage you to keep the Honor Code with you as you move through life. When you face difficulty, reflect back on what the Honor Code has meant to you, what this community has meant to you. And draw strength from that.

Above all, I encourage you to stay connected to Connecticut College. Your adult life has taken shape here. You have carved out important relationships – with close friends, classmates, professors – these will sustain you. And you will continue to develop new relationships within our network of more than 25,000 alumni across the globe. You all, we all, share a very important common bond in Connecticut College. This college is yours. Forever.

Congratulations to each and every one of you. On behalf of the entire College community, I wish you all the best. I will miss you.