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President Higdon's 92nd Commencement Address

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Connecticut College President Leo I. Higdon, Jr.
2010 Commencement
92nd Commencement
May 23, 2010

Good morning. To all of our graduates, parents and families, trustees, faculty, staff and honored guests, welcome. Today's program includes remarks by two of our seniors, awards for community service and scholarship for two extraordinary graduates, and we will confer honorary degrees upon our keynote speaker Jeffrey Sachs, and Mary Ellen Jukoski, the president of Mitchell College ...

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

I'd like to add my own thanks to 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: We came to Connecticut College at the same time. You were freshmen and I was a new president. There is always a bond with a class that comes in with a new president – we may have had some different experiences over the last four years, but we share many common memories. It will always make your class special in my mind.

You are graduating at a pivotal time in U.S. history – indeed, in the history of the world. In a global economic upheaval, traditional companies and organizations seek to redefine themselves and the work they do. Increasingly, they will look to your generation, and specifically to liberal arts graduates, for answers. With your comprehensive education, you have the qualities to succeed in this global arena.

And, you are graduating at an important point in Connecticut College's history. We have a Centennial Celebration ahead of us, a celebration that will involve you and all of our community. Throughout the Centennial, we will honor this College's legacy of excellence and look ahead to all of the possibilities our future holds.

As a class, you have already witnessed improvements to this College that ensure future generations of graduates – just like you – will be able to experience this campus in all its historic integrity and profound beauty.

As a class, you've also seen new initiatives implemented to enhance academics... and increase support for students.

Unfortunately as a class, you've also experienced tragic loss. When a highway crash took the life of your classmate Elizabeth Durante in March 2009, you pulled together as a community, rallied around her closest friends and many of you pledged to take on humanitarian commitments that honor her important legacy.

I'm proud of your strength and of your compassion.

I am also impressed with your intelligence and your talents. This class has excelled in academics and a variety of other areas, including athletics, arts, community service, environmental sustainability and much more.

I know that as alumni, your support for the College will be very strong. As you transition to being graduates of Connecticut College, I want to thank you in advance for the time, talent and support I know you will give this institution throughout your lives.

Here at Connecticut College, you've been engaged in the world around you – through community service 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 to 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 equity and inclusiveness as important components of your life-long learning.

Above all, I encourage you to stay connected to the College. Your adult life has taken shape here. You have carved out important relationships that will sustain you. And you will continue to develop relationships with 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.