

REACHING HIGHER AND BETTER

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Recognizing the impact of transformational service at 79th Commencement



Photos by Jodie Andruskevich

Rivier University celebrated its 79th Commencement at the Tsongas Center in Lowell, Mass. on Saturday, May 10. The University awarded 562 degrees to doctoral, master's, bachelor's, and associate degree graduates.

True to its core mission of 'transforming hearts and minds to serve the world,' Rivier highlighted both its 80th anniversary and the impact of transformational service on individuals and society.

During the ceremony, honorary degrees were presented to two individuals—James T. Brett, President and Chief Executive Officer of The New England Council, and devoted Rivier administrator, Sister Cecile Gamache, pm.

Mr. Brett delivered the Commencement address, celebrating the impact of transformational service as the University recognized his outstanding collaborative efforts to bring people and resources together to improve the New England region. In his remarks, Mr. Brett spoke of his brother Jack who was intellectually disabled and is the impetus to his lifelong involvement as an advocate for the physically and mentally challenged. He urged Rivier graduates to make their own commitments to serve others as they go out into the world. "Kindness begets kindness. That's what good neighbours do. They don't build fences. They don't turn away their gaze. They build networks of caring and acceptance. Where charity and love prevail, there God is ever found. Go and do likewise. Congratulations Class of 2014. "

Appointed to the chief leadership role at The New England Council in 1996, Mr. Brett is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions for outstanding public service. He was named the 2011 New Englander of the Year in recognition of his extraordinary commitment, leadership, and contributions to the quality of life in the region.

The University also presented an honorary doctorate of humane letters to Sister Cecile Gamache, pm in recognition of her exemplary service to the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary and to Rivier. Sister Cecile retired from her role as Rivier's Assistant Vice President of Finance and Operations in 2011. Her years of dedicated service have contributed to Rivier's financial vitality and solid position within the competitive higher education marketplace.

Magnolia Veronica Dixon, Student Government Association President of Avon, Maine, received a bachelor's degree in history, and spoke about commitment to serve and higher values on behalf of Rivier's undergraduate programs. "We have learned to be students of the world and embrace those around us who can teach us about different cultures and traditions. As a part of the Rivier community, we will take with us a commitment to reaching for higher and better values in our lives. Each one of us in the Class of 2014 stands for respect, engagement, compassion, honesty, and authenticity."

Student speaker for Rivier's graduate programs, Carol Ann Becker, MBA in Healthcare Administration, of Hudson, N.H., shared lessons of leadership and service. "Leadership requires unwavering dedication, commitment, and focus, as well as recognizing when you need to change direction," said Becker. "It's about doing the right things, even when you yourself are uncertain." ■



Rivier awards honorary Doctor of Humane Letters to two distinguished leaders at Commencement 2014



Mr. James T. Brett

Acknowledging his selfless devotion to improving the lives of others, the University presented **Mr. James T. Brett** with an honorary degree at Commencement 2014. Mr. Brett has made it his life's work to give voice to the needs of the voiceless, recognizing and promoting the dignity of the human person.

Mr. Brett has been the President and CEO of The New England Council since 1996, advocating for public policy issues including healthcare, education, and energy. His success at The New England Council follows an impressive 16-year tenure as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

A tireless advocate for the physically and mentally challenged, he has been recognized for his humanitarian work and his national contributions to the field of intellectual disability. He was appointed by former President George W. Bush to serve as a member of the President's Commission for People with Intellectual Disabilities and subsequently appointed as Chairman under the leadership of President Barack Obama.



Sister Cecile Gamache, pm

In recognition of her devotion and exemplary service to the University and community, **Sister Cecile Gamache, pm**, was presented with an honorary degree at the 2014 Commencement ceremony. A Class of 1954 graduate, Sister Cecile provided exceptional leadership to the University, serving as Rivier's Assistant Vice President of Finance and Operations for three decades, as a member of the Board of Trustees, and as a member of the Corporation.

Her wise counsel guided Rivier through many decades of growth—the conversion to computerized systems, the development of banking and investment policies, and the construction of several campus buildings.

At the heart of Sister Cecile's work was the commitment to Rivier's mission of 'transforming hearts and minds to serve the world.' This honorary degree acknowledges her devoted service, dedicated financial oversight, and faithful commitment to Rivier's mission.

REACHING HIGHER AND BETTER: 79TH COMMENCEMENT

