

COMMENCEMENT 2024

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Rivier Celebrates Largest Graduating Class in Its History



Thousands gathered at Rivier’s 89th Commencement in May to celebrate 912 associate, bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral graduates.

Seated before the stage, graduates’ brightly colored hoods and tassels dotted the expanse of black robes. A roar of anticipation and excitement rose as graduates were welcomed to the event.

This year’s ceremony highlighted the importance of diversity, inclusivity, education, and service as catalysts to personal and professional achievement. The University honored **Judge Talesha L. Saint-Marc, United States Magistrate Judge for the District of New Hampshire**, as its Commencement speaker and honorary degree recipient (*see page 3 below*).

Sharing her journey to become a lawyer and judge, Judge Saint-Marc challenged students to dream big, to choose courage over comfort, and to be kind as they pursue their life and career goals. Encouraging graduates to forever embrace Rivier’s mission—transforming hearts and minds to serve the world—Judge Saint-Marc offered, “I challenge you to emit kindness and to find ways to create community. Instead of emphasizing the ways we are different, focus on our communal commonality—the desire to improve our current condition and leave the next generation in a better position.”

Rivier graduates **Renee Merchant (B.A. in English)** and **Ezekiel Haradji (M.A.T. in Middle/Secondary Education)** spoke on behalf of undergraduate and graduate students, respectively.

Haradji reflected on the transformational experience of education; specifically, the many experiences and people that influence students’ lives. “By the experiences we gained in this community, we realize that it takes only one professor to transform your heart and mind to serve the world,” shared Haradji. “For many of us, there are multiple people here today who contributed to painting the picture of who we are. We are eternally grateful.”

Merchant reflected on the willingness to embrace change as a key factor in intellectual growth and community advancement. “Class of 2024, as we prepare to embark on our individual journeys, as we step out into the world, let us use our education to be agents for positive change. Let us embrace change with open hearts and open minds, knowing that it is through change that we can grow, and together create a better world.”

The ceremony was livestreamed and can be viewed at www.rivier.edu/commencement2024. A gallery of Commencement photos is posted on the University’s Facebook page.

COMMENCEMENT 2024 —
RIVIER CELEBRATES LARGEST GRADUATING CLASS IN ITS HISTORY



Each 2024 graduate received a personalized video clip from Commencement.
Graduates can check their Rivier e-mail to download their clip, free of charge.

An inspirational leader and advocate for higher education

In recognition of her service to the State of New Hampshire and Rivier, the University conferred an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree on The Honorable Judge Talesha L. Saint-Marc.



Judge Talesha L. Saint-Marc
United States Magistrate Judge for
the District of New Hampshire

Judge Talesha L. Saint-Marc made history in 2023 as the first African American judge appointed to serve on the federal bench in New Hampshire. Her leadership and many accomplishments demonstrate the power of education, perseverance, and service.

Judge Saint-Marc is a lifelong New Hampshire resident and Vice Chair of the Rivier University Board of Trustees. Prior to her appointment as Magistrate Judge, she specialized in labor and employment law with Bernstein, Shur, Sawyer & Nelson, P.A. and became a shareholder in the firm in 2019.

Her Honor has distinguished herself in the legal community as an active member of the New Hampshire Bar Association (NHBA). She is a graduate and past chair of the NHBA's Leadership Academy, as well as past chair of the Labor and Employment Section and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. She has served on the Boards of the New Hampshire Women's Bar Association and New Hampshire Legal Assistance.

Actively engaged with the community, Judge Saint-Marc provides leadership and support to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Nashua, the Bishop Estee and Ida Newman Scholarship Fund, the American Heart Association, and the Circle Program, which provides skills- and confidence-building opportunities to girls from low-income families. ■