

connections

CHARTER OAK STATE COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

SUMMER/FALL 2020 VOL. XLVI NO. 2

Commencement Ceremony Honors 2020 Graduates Virtually



In a year like no other, graduates, along with their friends and families, celebrated their new college degrees during a live streaming event prepared especially for this group of graduates. For the very first time, Charter Oak State College held a virtual commencement ceremony online honoring its graduating class. This 46th Commencement and first-ever virtual celebration honored the Class of 2020 with pre-recorded footage of speakers, students, and congratulatory messages from faculty and staff, along with the scrolling appearance of each graduate's name and degree.

Over 500 students were honored in a video designed to send well wishes and kudos during the ceremony hosted live on the College's YouTube channel on Thursday, August 27th at 3PM ET. The webcast remains on www.CharterOak.edu/graduation for those graduates and families unable to attend the live streamed event.

College President Ed Klonoski addressed the graduates as well as Honorary Degree

Recipient, Wendy Garcia, Class of 2012 and Student Speaker, Tenell Rhodes, Sr. Both Mark Ojakian, President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and Matt Fleury, Chair of the Connecticut

Board of Regents for Higher Education also offered pre-recorded congratulatory messages to the graduates.

In his remarks, President Klonoski welcomed the viewing audience and congratulated the graduates acknowledging their hard work and completion of long-awaited dreams often delayed by false starts, work and family responsibilities. He commended them for their courage to try again, putting aside barriers that blocked their original degree efforts. He said, "to me, taking the risk to start again is far more interesting than the reasons why you didn't finish the first time." He also acknowledged the COVID-19 outbreak and reminded the graduates that "facing these challenges and continuing to push forward and navigate in uncharted times, shows the true depth of your character and how resilient you are." He closed by applauding their courage and generosity and encouraged them to share their time, talent and knowledge with those around them.

He then verbally conferred all degrees and invited the graduates to move their tassels from right to left.

The student speaker was Tenelle Rhodes, Sr. Rhodes completed a Bachelor of Science in General Studies with a Concentration in Individualized Studies. He called the Class of 2020 'The Overcomers' and congratulated them on their ability to overcome unexpected obstacles and challenges including overcoming the Coronavirus Pandemic! He shared his 30 year journey and promise to his mother to earn a bachelor's degree and noted that everyone has had a different struggle, but that struggle is universal and he said "to keep going and be students of life and students for life."

The College Honorary Degree was awarded to Wendy Garcia, Class of 2012, who spoke of reaching a plateau in her career that required a bachelor's degree. She, like many Charter Oak graduates, attended college directly after high school but finally finished her degree at the age of 44. Garcia challenged the graduates "to brag about completing their degrees, that it takes hard work, dedication and commitment, and they



Charter Oak State College
Virtual Commencement
August 27, 2020 (3PM EST)
#CharterOak2020

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THE PRESIDENT'S TAKE



Pandemic Musings

I write this latest contribution to Connections from home. All of Charter Oak's dedicated staff are providing support to our students, faculty, and each other from home. In March, the College saw the pandemic closure coming, and we experimented with our ability to work from home by closing the college buildings for two days. When we returned,

we had a chance to tweak our technology before the Governor ordered everyone home. The result of this preparation meant that we were ready to meet our students' needs without disruption. I am intensely proud of the staff for their perseverance over the past five months in the face of a variety of challenges from this virus, not the least of which is isolation from their friends and colleagues.

But that has not been the end of our challenges. As I write this, the state of Connecticut is struggling with massive power outages from the effects of a tropical storm that blasted the state several days ago. Many lost power and restoration may take over a week. Once again, the staff and faculty and, in this case many of our students, are struggling to keep operating without the technology tools they rely on. We have made allowances for students and faculty who have missed deadlines because of this crisis, and our staff is finding a way to keep the business of the College moving forward. I can tell you that I have never been more impressed with them (do you see a pattern here?).

And now, higher education is working to re-open their on-ground facilities to students, faculty, and staff. Charter Oak has created a re-opening plan, but it will be anchored on principles of safety first. We will bring back some volunteers into our buildings on rotating weeks. We will limit people to their week and to their assigned building to reduce the chance for exposure. Most of the staff will continue to work from home. Because we are an online college, our mission does not require that we bring everyone back onto campus, and that is a competitive advantage for us in this crisis.

So how is all this working? Our enrollment for our summer sessions was up 10%, and our enrollment for Fall is trending up by

that same 10%. Our new graduate program – Health Informatics – has the class size it requires to launch. On that front, we are pleased to announce the development of the Health Sciences and Technology Department at COSC. This Department is a combination of current programs that overlap in curriculum and strategic goals. The programs include Bachelor of Health Care Administration, Bachelor of Health Information Management, Master of Health Care Administration, Master of Health Informatics, and associated certificate programs. This new structure will allow for continued opportunities in dual degrees and the potential for accelerated options. Having a single department will help to better align offerings, accreditation requirements, monitoring and reporting, and streamlined services. The directors of these programs were already working closely together to maintain a cohesive group of program offerings and it became clear that it would make sense to come together formally as a department with a shared strategic plan, shared goals, and a shared work team.

In short, Charter Oak is moving forward. In addition to our workforce degree programs, we believe that working adults will return to college for smaller credentials – certificates – to supplement their skills. To facilitate this need, we have applied for permission to offer financial aid for Medical Coding and for Speech and Language Pathology Studies. That aid will become available this Fall, and we plan to apply for financial aid for others this year. Once again, the College is working to meet our adult students where they need us. Low cost, online certificates offer our students a path forward within the workforce.

Finally, our Foundation launched a special program for students affected by COVID-19 called **Charter Oak Cares**. They are using the funds donated to offer our students immediate help with the costs of attendance. If you are moved to donate, you can go to <https://app.etapestry.com/onlineformsCharterOakStateCollege/COC-CharterOakCares.html>.

As always, I welcome your feedback at eklonoski@charteroak.edu. Stay safe.

Ed Klonoski, President

"Commencement Ceremony" continued from pg. 1



Student Speaker, Tenelle Rhodes, Sr. records his video address to the graduates.

should be proud and stay humble!"

Dr. Shirley Adams, Provost of Charter Oak State College shared demographic facts about the Class of 2020, including that 70% were women; graduates ranged in age from 18 to 68, with the average age being 36; graduates hailed from 34 states and Canada with 66% from Connecticut; 42% earned honors; 18 graduated with a Master's degree, over 450 graduated with a Bachelor's degree, more than 50 graduated with an Associate's degree; 78% of Master's degree recipients

also earned a Bachelor's at Charter Oak previously, a third of graduates used multiple methods to earn college credit and most of the graduates earned their degrees while also working full time. The WIT and CT-WAGE special programs graduated seven students.

Graduates Damon DePaolo, Barkhamsted, CT, William McBriarty, Wallingford, CT and Francis Nerkowski, Clinton, CT all earned Awards for Outstanding Academic Performance.

Congratulations to the Class of 2020! 🌱

Hello Charter Oak Alumni and 2020 Graduates!

I am sure we can all agree that this year is not turning out how any of us have envisioned. As we set our goals and made our plans, the unthinkable occurred and most of us were stopped in our tracks and quarantined at home. To the essential workers, we raise a glass or tip our hat in respectful regard. Thank you for your work, whether it was in education, healthcare, food service, retail, or public safety your commitment to our communities kept the masses learning, cared for, fed, stocked, and protected.

To the 2020 Graduates, we say "very well done in the face of the unprecedented", "be proud of your accomplishments, remember how you struggled but also how you succeeded!" Congratulations!

Before COVID-19 became the talk of 2020, your Alumni Association was working diligently to create a new strategic plan for the start of the new era – the 20's. Planning meetings were held, and social events were planned.

We held a very well attended and exciting social at the Ice Level Lounge of the Hartford Wolf Pack in January. The proceeds from the event supported the Alumni Association master's degree scholarship program.

We like to think we had the best seats in the house!

Then, many things came to a halt and our meetings became virtual meet and greets in an attempt to stay connected. Planning for the fall of 2020 is in the works, however, with careful consideration for the pandemic restrictions.

New Volunteer Board Members are needed as we work to bring the 2020 Vision of the COSC Alumni Association into focus: to be a vast community of engaged partners who build relationships and empower the pursuit of education and career satisfaction.

Together we would like to expand our common purpose to create increased engagement. Today, you can choose to give back to Charter Oak and to become a part of the Charter Oak State College Alumni Association.

You might be asking - *How can YOU be a Part?*

It is as easy as 1, 2, 3 – Join, Volunteer, Participate

1) Join our volunteer leadership as we work to unite the COSC's Alumni Community – as we build relationships and empower the pursuit of education and career satisfaction.

2) Volunteer with our Acorns in Action or become an Ambassador for Charter Oak

Or, simply -

3) Participate Choose to stay connected and be involved with our events, workshops, and more.



John Thomas, the Alumni Association President, said it best, "I remember my graduation day and that feeling of appreciation that I had for Charter Oak. I felt a strong need to give back in some way, and today I still have that same appreciation and respect for Charter Oak. I chose to give back, and to go back! Not only am I an alum – I am a student again in the Masters' program!"

We would like to officially welcome all the 2020 Graduates to the Charter Oak Alumni Community! As well as welcome all graduates to join us and stay connected. As you forge new paths on your career and educational journey, please keep us posted by emailing alumni@charteroak.edu with your updates.

Take a minute to complete the Alumni Survey and consider membership for only \$15. Any Alum who joins before September 30th will be entered into a drawing to win a gift-card to our brand new, Official Online Store! Watch your email for membership information, or visit www.charteroak.edu/alumni for the survey and membership details. 🌱

Carol Hall, Associate Director of Development, Charter Oak State College

Upcoming Virtual Events

Thursday, October 1, 2020, Alumni Association ~ Meet the Board! Virtual Happy Hour

Saturday, October 3, 2020, Alumni Association ~ Meet the Board! Virtual Coffee Hour

Watch your email for registration details, or register by emailing alumni@charteroak.edu and the link will be emailed to you.

Doris G. Cassiday Awards Granted to 2020 Graduates

The Doris G. Cassiday Award is given to those graduates of Charter Oak State College who have achieved excellence in innovative learning and who exemplify the essence of the Charter Oak mission. With this award, the College recognizes individuals who avail themselves fully of a broad range of learning options, earning credits both inside and outside the traditional classroom setting. Options include distance learning, testing, portfolio assessment, contract learning, military service training schooling and other non-collegiate sponsored instruction which has been evaluated for

credit, as well as classroom instruction.

The Cassiday Award was created in 1998 in the name of Doris Cassiday, a founding member of Charter Oak State College, in recognition of her longstanding commitment to higher education. Doris served the college for over 30 years; as its first Chairman upon creation, and again as the first Foundation Chairman. She then went on to work directly with students as Assistant Director of Academic Programs as an academic counselor for many years. The award continues on in memory of the dedication and leadership that she provided to the College. 🌱



2020 Doris G. Cassiday Award recipients included:

Zachariah Bellmer, Highland Park, IL
Troy Campbell, Hampton, VA
Russell Cook, East Hartford, CT
Brendan Moon, Southington, CT
Wendy Pelletier, West Gardiner, ME
Joseph Poirier, Everett, MA

Congratulations to all!

Show Your Charter Oak Pride!

Visit - <https://www.rhinogift.com/charter-oak-.htm>, proceeds from each purchase benefit our scholarship program. Items shown below can be personalized and shipped directly to your home. 🌱



STAYCONNECTED!

We always like to hear from our alumni about promotions, graduate degrees, awards, marriages, births, and other significant successes in your life. Email updates to share to chall@charteroak.edu.

Alumni benefits include a newly sponsored insurance program.

Charter Oak Alumni Insurance Program

Did you know the Charter Oak State College Alumni Association now sponsors an Alumni Insurance Program as a service to our graduates? The program offers a variety of attractively-priced insurance products, most of which are available to alumni, students, faculty and staff, as well as spouses, parents, children, and siblings.



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Celebrate Your Accomplishment with a Charter Oak Class Ring!

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Visit the website
or call
800-854-7464
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happenings

🌿 **Remote deployment of College Staff** began on March 10 in response to the emergency operations plan related to the Coronavirus Pandemic. To date, the College has successfully delivered all courses, instruction, advising, admissions and business office functions both internally and externally. Virtual Open Houses and Events have become the norm for now and are proving to be well attended and accepted.

🌿 **Summer Enrollment** was the largest ever for the College, demonstrating that our product and efforts remain a trusted, solid option in good times and bad. Please share www.CharterOak.edu with anyone you think may benefit from an online degree program.

🌿 **The Bachelor of Science in Nursing program** is continuing to work on its accreditation process. An evaluation of the program is scheduled with the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) in late September.

🌿 **A new Always Learning Webinar series** was launched by the Corporate Outreach team in June to keep the College front and center virtually and engage our corporate partners. The initial 3-part series titled “Stay Home, Stay Positive” on maintaining positive well-being in difficult times was extremely well attended. A new 4-part series titled “COVID-19: Health Care Lessons & Emerging Trends” will discuss the impact of the Pandemic across our health care system from various angles.

🌿 **New Majors are launching this fall.** The College continues to expand its offering at all levels. A new graduate level M.S. in Health Informatics combines patient care and the application of information, data and technology driven innovations at the leadership level. New Bachelor of Science degrees are available in Human Resources Management and Organizational Leadership, and a new Paraprofessional Associate degree is also available. As always, see the website at www.CharterOak.edu for details on all programs.

🌿 **Our Faculty remain active polishing their expertise** outside of the classroom. Brooke Palkie, EdD, RHIA presented “Social Determinants of Health” via webinar to the Health Information Management Associations of Western PA and Rhode Island in April and June respectively. Additionally, she presented this material virtually to the Tri-State HIMA Conference in late September. She recently contributed chapters to two textbooks and has submitted material on the state of Health Informatics education to a peer-reviewed journal for publication. Mark Dunn, HIM faculty member, was appointed Director of Health Information Management at Holyoke Medical Center, Holyoke, MA. In this role he will ensure the efficient and compliant handling of all patient records and related documentation.

A Note from Nursing Program Director Linda Perfetto

Linda M. Perfetto PhD, RN, CNE, CNOR, FAADN

RN to BSN Program

As our country celebrates heroes of the COVID-19 Pandemic, our nurses have strongly emerged as public health advocates and educators in addition to their ever-important role at the bedside. In addition to caring for those acutely ill from the virus, nurses continue to care on the front line as they attend births, assist in urgent surgeries, staff our emergency departments, and address essential healthcare needs throughout our communities that haven't gone away. The role of the nurse has expanded as they fill the void of family members unable to be with their loved ones during times of great pain, sadness, and loss.

The college salutes these heroes for all they do every day. We are proud of our RN-BSN students who have stood strong and resilient as they grow and continue to learn during these unprecedented times. We are thankful for our talented and esteemed faculty who facilitate student learning. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with more and more nurses who continue to enroll at a steady pace.

Please direct any inquiries about the program directly to Linda Perfetto, RN-BSN Program Director at lperfetto@charteroak.edu. Thank you! 🌿

Charter Oak State College Foundation Donor Recognition & Appreciation

*Thank You to all who gave to Charter Oak State College Foundation.
Together, we are working to Bridge the Economic Gap of Disparity and Change Lives!*



Please know that your gift will be used to help the next student achieve their dream of earning a college degree, improve their career options, and change the financial outlook for their life, their family, and even generations to come. This year, we have seen an unprecedented event bring our country to a stand-still, however, our students at Charter Oak State College were able to continue with their studies, uninterrupted, through the established platform of Charter Oak and because of the generosity of many of our community members. Thank you!

You may have answered the call to help **Bridge the Gap** through our Annual Appeal, or generously supported our **CharterOak Cares** emergency funding initiative, the **Employer Appreciation Breakfast**, our **Women in Transition Program**, **Student Crisis Fund**, our **virtual fundraisers**, or even turned your **BIG 80's Dance Party** sponsorship or attendance fee into a gift to the cause of **Degree Completion!**

*To All of YOU from all of us, the Foundation Board, College leaders and staff, faculty, students, alumni, and our 2020 graduates
~ Thank you!*

*The Donor list reflects gifts received in fiscal year 2020, from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. *Loyalty in Giving, reflects our donors who have generously and consistently donated for five (5) years, consecutively.*

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Please contact the Foundation by calling **Carol Hall at 860-515-3889** to discuss your bequest, or please consider conveniently making a donation online at www.charteroak.edu/foundation/give.cfm.

We need your help and no matter what the size, each gift directly impacts our students.

connections

SUMMER/FALL 2020 • VOLUME XLVI, NUMBER 2

Issued semi-annually for alumni and friends of Charter Oak State College.

CharterOakSM STATE COLLEGE

Degrees Without Boundaries

Charter Oak State College complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination and affirmative action.

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