

Stockton's Largest Graduating Class to Date Receives Degrees in Baccalaureate Ceremonies

Patti McGill Peterson, Expert on Global Education, Tells Graduates:
'Dream the Big Dream'

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Peterson invoked “the dream of Vera King Farris,” Stockton’s third president, and said: “She would have continued her work in science but she chose to think and dream more broadly about how to prepare graduates like you for the wider world. She understood that to be the CEO of Stockton was not just a job; it was a calling to something much larger. Like Dr. Farris, I want all of you to have a big dream and to feel the pull of a calling.”

“Education for the big dream is not narrow; it engages the brain and the heart. It provides perspective, it connects dots and it can deepen your convictions, but it also helps you to be a constructive skeptic by developing what my father would have called ‘a good crap detector’ (aka to engage the mind in critical thinking).”

Peterson talked about how the late Steve Jobs of Apple “often talked about the importance of following your dreams and of enlarging them as you move through life. His ultimate stated dream was to ‘put a ding in the universe.’”

She concluded by saying: “I wish you the power of a broad and deep education from Stockton University, the courage to follow your dreams and ideals, the willingness to look to far horizons and n’shallah, the chance to put a ding in the universe.”

Peterson oversees work on the internationalization and global engagement of higher education for ACE, the major coordinating association for higher education institutions in the United States.

She has also worked to increase access and success in postsecondary education while a senior associate at the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) and served as executive director of the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), which has administered the Fulbright Scholar Program since 1947.

Peterson was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree, with trustee Raymond Ciccone, a 1979 alumnus, and trustee Ellen Bailey conferring it.

“Throughout our history, Stockton has remained committed to its mission of excellence in teaching, reinforced by support for scholarship and dedication to service,” President Harvey Kesselman, a member of Stockton’s inaugural class, told the gathering.

“Although our footprint has changed over the past 45 years, our guarantee to students has been steadfast. Stockton has always been a place where students can plant themselves and grow,” Kesselman continued. “Those familiar with Stockton’s history know this to be our first motto, an invitation to intellectual and personal growth, pointing to our rich, natural environment.

“Our transformation from a small state college nestled in the Pinelands National Reserve to a growing university signifies our deep dedication to providing a distinctive educational experience at the baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral levels and reflects Stockton’s evolution into a premier institution of higher learning,” he said.

“Candidates, your Stockton education equips you to succeed in your workplaces, personal lives, further education, and in your communities,” Kesselman continued. “Through academic rigor and co-curricular engagement we have nurtured your ability to communicate, collaborate, and to be innovative, all critical skills in the 21st century.”

He concluded by telling the graduates: “We have asked a lot of you during your years at Stockton and you have risen to each level of challenge. I will make one more request of you –

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change your world! Do this by the way you build communities, raise families, support social justice and educate others, and by being kind and civil to one another. You are our best hope for a meaningful future in a world filled with innovation, imagination and optimism.”

Brian Tyrrell, president of the Faculty Senate and associate professor of Hospitality and Tourism Management Studies, addressed the graduates, saying: “I ask that you consider every day of your life an opportunity to reflect on the past and anticipate the future. Your Stockton liberal arts education can enhance the whole of your life’s journey.

“Draw upon it during times of challenge. Celebrate it during times of joy. Always, carry this milestone with you, and remember it whenever you apply what you’ve learned while at Stockton.”

Heather Gale, a Sociology/Anthropology major from Dorchester in Cumberland County, N.J., addressed the graduates of the Schools of Health Sciences and Social and Behavioral Sciences during the afternoon ceremony. After graduation she plans to work in the field of refugee resettlement and advocacy.

“Stockton has been a special place for us,” Gale told her fellow graduates. “We have gained new appreciation for our academic specialties, learned about ourselves and each other. At Stockton University, we experienced an environment of mutual support, empathetic acceptance, and openness to others that are markedly different than ourselves, which I believe, has helped each of us to succeed. When students sat through presentations of fellow classmates, or held discussions with people of differing opinions, always present was this idea of openness, acceptance, and community.

“This was due in part to caring professors who educated us in our fields, exposed us to new ideas, and were invested in our personal success.,” she continued “They asked us to expand ourselves beyond what we thought we were capable of doing, knowing, or being and we have answered that challenge which is why we are here today.

“One of the passions I have been fortunate to be able to share, is a sincere interest and desire to advocate for the rights of refugees,” Gale said. “Attending an advocacy art presentation here on campus inspired me to create this quilted wall hanging in honor of Alan Shenu, also known as Aylan Kurdi, the little 3-year-old boy who died crossing the Mediterranean with his family in the fall of 2015, one of the many refugees that have been forced to flee their homes because of persecution, war or conflict. Later, I was able to expand this idea and be pa.6(o)10.6(ex5Lat)-6(t)-6.6(Tc 0.007

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working in the building. After he explained his story, Sowers offered moral support and then helped him connect with academic advisors so he was able to start classes in September 2014.

Today he was cheered on by his wife, Uma, their twin 6-year-old sons, Luv and Kush, his father, Remesh, mother, Premillaben, and his friend, Hitesh Patel, who drove up from Florida to help celebrate. The two of them had started their pursuit of higher education together in India more than two decades ago.

The commencement procession was led by Grand Marshal G.T. Lenard, associate professor of Development Writing. The graduating class presented a student lounge in the I-Wing gallery to the university as its parting gift.

Singing of the national anthem was led by Danielle Quinn, a Stockton University student at the afternoon ceremony and by the Vocal Jazz Ensemble in the morning, with piano accompaniment by Music Professor Beverly Vaughn. Quinn also led the singing of the alma mater, "Ospreys on Parade," in the afternoon, while it was sung by 2016 graduates Nicholas Castillo and Danielle Harbright in the morning. The alma mater was written by Professor
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