

# **Bristol Community College hosts most unique Commencement Ceremony in Bristol's history**

Perseverance was the theme at Bristol Community College's 53rd Virtual Commencement Ceremony held on Friday, August 21, 2020, at 5:30 p.m., on Bristol's 2020 Commencement website, Facebook and YouTube pages.

Bristol Community College's 53rd Commencement Ceremony, originally scheduled for Saturday, May 30, 2020, was postponed due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The reimagined virtual commencement ceremony featured many of the same elements of the traditional, in-person commencement, including recognizing graduates from each Bristol location by name and honoring distinguished community members. Offering the unique ceremony online also provided the opportunity for friends and family from all around the world to participate in the celebration, in real-time, while keeping everyone safe and healthy.

"So many of our students have long balanced the responsibilities of pursuing an education while caring for loved ones, holding multiple jobs and triumphing over obstacles. The COVID-19 pandemic quickly amplified these challenges and Bristol's proud graduates were able to persevere. It requires creativity, resilience and compassion to navigate life's obstacles, find balance and remain focused," said Laura L. Douglas, President, Bristol Community College. "The strength and determination Bristol's graduates have demonstrated has brought them to where they are today and will take them wherever they want to go."

As one of the largest community college graduating classes in Massachusetts, Bristol Community College awarded approximately 1,200 degrees and certificates, including degrees in Associate in Science, Associate in Arts, and Associate in Applied Science. Certificates of achievement were also awarded. Academic achievement with cum laude, magna cum laude and summa cum laude designations were recognized.

Bristol Community College's complete 2020 Virtual Commencement Ceremony can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/YdiRFE6DmMM>.

Over the last few months, Bristol has been working hard to determine the best and safest way to celebrate our graduates and student success. While the college hoped to hold an in-person ceremony, as the pandemic continues to evolve, the college knew that safely hosting our Commencement Ceremony – of typically more than 3,000 guests – was not possible in the coming months. More than 250 students responded to a graduation survey and a virtual commencement was voted as the first choice for many students – more than the other options presented. The college also welcomed 2020 Bristol graduates wishing to walk across the stage and be celebrated in person, the option to attend the college's 2021 Commencement Ceremony.

Leading up to the Commencement Ceremony, the college has shared student stories of perseverance and commitment. Bristol is celebrating the 2020 graduates with the college's virtual Class of 2020 Yearbook and a care package was mailed to Bristol's graduates containing a diploma cover, graduation tassel, keepsake program book, Bristol Alumni pin and decal.

In keeping with tradition, the following prestigious awards were presented during Bristol's 2020 Virtual Commencement Ceremony:

#### **CLASS OF 2020 VALEDICTORIAN AND SALUTATORIAN**



*2020 Bristol Community College Valedictorian Viviane M. Goese.* This year's Valedictorian is Viviane M. Goese, of Swansea, Associate in Arts in liberal arts & sciences (humanities transfer); and the Salutatorian is Ethan Mort, of Mattapoisett, Associate in Arts in liberal arts & sciences (behavioral and social sciences transfer).

Viviane M. Goese began her journey at Bristol as an English as a Second Language (ESL) adult learner. During her time at

Bristol, she gracefully balanced her responsibilities of caring for her family while pursuing the opportunity she had once not thought possible – to earn a college degree. In addition to her outstanding academic achievements, she has positively contributed to the college community in her service as a tutor and a role model for others.

She credits the support and encouragement of her instructors for her successful transition from the college's ESL program to college courses and being asked to serve as a tutor. As a tutor for Bristol's Quest program supporting first-generation, low-income students and/or students with disabilities, she strengthened her own confidence and academic development.

She challenged herself and excelled as a member of Bristol's Commonwealth Honors Program and was appointed as a supplemental instructor in the college's Dual Enrollment Program, assisting in the education and professional development of high school students simultaneously earning high school and college credits. She also served Bristol as a tireless volunteer and advocate for the college's Holocaust and Genocide Center's initiatives and events.

She was recently accepted at Brown University, in Providence, R.I., in the Resumed Undergraduate Education (RUE) Program, where she aims to pursue the open curriculum offered by the institution. Through its multidisciplinary approach, she aims to achieve her intellectual ambitions while pursuing her goal of becoming an educator.

Ethan Mort developed his academic foundation and inspiration while earning his associate in liberal arts at Bristol before transferring to George Washington University (GWU), in Washington D.C., in Spring 2020.

In addition to his outstanding academic record, Ethan enhanced his experience at Bristol by becoming active in the college community and participating in ongoing lecture series for

students. He served as an active member of the college's Seeds of Sustainability Club, advocating and educating communities toward sustainable lifestyles as well as the Chief Organizer of the Bristol Climate Day of Active Education. The college-wide event promoted and raised awareness of the issues of climate change and carbon drawdown.

He attributes the support of his hard-working family and the college's dedicated faculty members to his academic achievements and preparation for success at a four-year institution.

Ethan is pursuing a major in political science and a double minor in history and international relations at GWU, where he participates on the GWU Parliamentary Debate Team. He plans to pursue a career in the political field in a position he feels can create change.

## **DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN AWARD**

The Distinguished Citizen Award is presented annually to an outstanding local citizen whose character and achievements have enriched the life of the community, or to an individual who has made distinguished contributions in the fields of health, education, business, industry, labor, government or the arts.

This year, the Distinguished Citizen Award was presented to Joseph A. Marshall.

Joseph A. Marshall is the Founder and President of J. Marshall Associates, a financial planning firm in Fall River, and a dedicated member of the community whose contributions are highly regarded.

Upon return from his dedicated service in the United States Air Force, including a tour of duty in Vietnam, Joseph graduated from Bristol Community College in 1978, prior to transferring to the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth,

where he earned his bachelor's degree.

He has held numerous leadership roles at Bristol throughout his devoted service to the college. Most recently, as Chair of the Board of Trustees following his service on the board since 2007. He is also the former President of the Bristol Community College Foundation. He is the recipient of Bristol's 2007 Cornerstone Entrepreneur Award and 2016 Paragon Award. In 2018, the college dedicated the new Joseph A. Marshall Veterans Center, on the Bristol Fall River campus, for Mr. Marshall's tireless advocacy for Bristol and student veterans.

Marshall is also a recognized community servant. He has served on several city boards and community groups, including the Fall River Office of Economic Development, the Board of Assessors, SER-Jobs for Progress, the Prince Henry Society of Fall River, and he currently serves as the Chair of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall Committee. He was recently named the recipient of BMC Durfee High School's Distinguished Alumnus award in 2020.

He is a life-long resident of Fall River with his wife, Joanne. They have four daughters and eight grandchildren.

### **HONORARY ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN HUMANE LETTERS**

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education has granted Bristol Community College the right to award honorary associate degrees in humane letters. The college awards these degrees to individuals who illustrate, through a career of intellect and service, the best of Bristol Community College's vision – to change the world, learner by learner.

This year's recipient was Margery Eagan.

Margery Eagan is the co-host of 89.7 WGBH's midday program Boston Public Radio, featuring smart and engaging conversations with leaders and thinkers shaping the Boston region. Subjects of her thought-provoking commentaries include



gender and women's issues, Catholicism and politics.

Margery has strong connections to the South Coast region. She grew up in Fall River and attended BMC Durfee High School before graduating from Stanford University, in Calif., where she earned her bachelor's degree in American studies.

She has written for her hometown newspaper, The Herald News, as well as for The Standard-Times of New Bedford. She has contributed to The Boston Globe, Burlington Vermont Free Press, Boston Magazine and The Boston Herald, where she was a columnist for 27 years. In 2015 and 2016, she earned national awards from the Religion Newswriters Association.

She currently lives in Brookline and has three grown children. She has a perfect attendance record at BMC Durfee High School reunions and two of her closest friends are high school classmates.

## **LAST LECTURE**

The Last Lecture is a faculty honor created by the Bristol Community College Student Senate. The award honors one exemplary faculty member who has affected students' education and their lives in significant ways.

Melissa Cardelli, M.S. C.A.G.S., Coordinator of the Early Childhood Education Careers Certificate and Degree programs at Bristol Community College, was selected by students to deliver the Last Lecture at Bristol's 2020 Virtual Commencement Ceremony.

Since she joined the college in 2004, Melissa has been committed to working with the college and regional community to strengthen the early childhood education profession and to promote increased educational and professional opportunities for early childhood educators. In addition to strengthening her community and profession, she is recognized for her dedication to student success and support.

Melissa has over 20 years of experience in the field of early childhood education as a professor, early childhood educator, family childcare professional and program coordinator. She received her Bachelor of Arts in sociology (social services) from the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth in Dartmouth; her Master of Science certificate and Master of Science in parent education and support from Wheelock College in Boston; and her Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (C.A.G.S) in early childhood education from the American International College in Springfield. Melissa also serves as President of the Board of Directors for the Children's Museum of Greater Fall River.

She has been the recipient of several awards at the college including the Silver Shield Award in 2009, a National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Award in 2012, as well as the President's Volunteer Service Award and Massachusetts Colleges Online Course of Distinction Award in 2014.

## **GRAND MARSHALL**

Dr. Mary Zahm, Professor of Psychology at Bristol Community College, has been honored to serve as the Grand Marshall at Bristol's 2020 Virtual Commencement Ceremony. Continuing Bristol's tradition of awarding this honor to one of the college's longest-serving faculty or staff members, Dr. Zahm lead this year's graduates and proud viewers to the virtual commencement stage.

Dr. Zahm joined the college in 1994 in the college's psychology and sociology department and has served at the college as a dedicated associate professor and professor of psychology and formerly as the pioneering director of the college's Civic Engagement program. Prior to Bristol, she served as a Human Factors Engineer at the Raytheon Company in Portsmouth, R.I.



She received her Bachelor of Science in social and health services and Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Roger Williams University in Bristol, R.I.; her Master of Arts in personality and social psychology from Rhode Island College in Providence, R.I.; and her Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in experimental psychology from the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, R.I.

She has been the recipient of several awards at the college including the Silver Shield Award for Excellence in Teaching and Community Service in 1997, Inducted into the Sceptre and Scroll Society for exceptional college-wide service in 2001, the Phi Theta Kappa Recognition Award in 2008 as well as the Legacy Award for dedication and service to Bristol's Civic Engagement Program.

For more information about Bristol Community College's 2020 Virtual Commencement Ceremony, please visit <http://www.bristolcc.edu/commencement>.