

Bristol Community College celebrates 2021 Virtual Commencement Ceremony, Valedictorian, Salutatorian and prestigious award recipients

Bristol Community College celebrated its 54th Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 22, 2021, at 5:30 p.m., on Bristol's 2021 Commencement website, Facebook and YouTube pages. The ceremony's unique virtual format featured new additions, including fun "watch party" packages sent to each graduate with their cap, gown and special celebratory items.

"Your college achievements do not have to be solely defined by the unprecedented challenges we have faced over the last year. You have worked hard each and every day to make this happen for yourself and your families. Your ability to get through the last year is just a testament to your tenacity, perseverance and Bayhawk grit," said Laura L. Douglas, Ph.D., President, Bristol Community College. "Whether you are continuing your education or entering the workforce, your possibilities are endless and your future is bright."

As one of the largest community college graduating classes in Massachusetts, Bristol Community College awarded approximately 1,159 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.

Last August, hundreds of students and their families, as well

as faculty, staff and guests from across the world, tuned into Bristol's first-ever virtual commencement ceremony to celebrate and cheer on our graduates together in real-time. This year's event featured many of the same elements of a traditional in-person commencement including recognizing each dedicated graduate who earned their credential by name.

In keeping with tradition, the following prestigious awards were presented during Bristol's 2021 Virtual Commencement Ceremony:

CLASS OF 2021 VALEDICTORIAN AND SALUTATORIAN



2021 Bristol Community College Valedictorian – Katherine Haley. Photo by BCC.

This year's Valedictorian is Katherine Haley of Fall River, Associate in Arts in liberal arts & sciences (psychology transfer); and the Salutatorian is Lydia Bolger of Mansfield, Associate in Science in office administration (executive administrative assistant).

Katherine Haley of Fall River is a student leader focused on issues pertaining to homelessness and addiction. At Bristol, she excelled academically and served the college as the recording officer of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, a student advocate on the National Community College Funding Committee, and as a Commonwealth Honors Program Scholar researching how the addiction recovery community is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. A believer in the power of education and connection to community, she designed and participates in mentorship programs for students in need of additional support at the college.

She credits Bristol's dedicated faculty and staff for encouraging and challenging her, both academically and personally, to expand her horizons and explore opportunities that she had not considered.

Katherine has extended her critical work by volunteering in her community at the River to Recovery substance abuse recovery program in Fall River and at Bristol's monthly Mobile Food Market, in partnership with the Greater Boston Food Banks. Through her work with local addiction treatment programs, Katherine is focused on assisting others through their recovery process and ending the stigma about addiction.

She will continue her education at Brown University in the field of psychology with a focus on trauma.



2021 Bristol Community College Valedictorian – Katherine Haley. Photo by BCC.

Lydia Bolger of Mansfield, enrolled at Bristol in 2018 as an ambitious adult learner determined to achieve her life-long goal of earning a college degree. After losing her job of 10 years to her company's closing, Lydia decided to view her situation as a positive, life-changing opportunity to begin her college education and pursue a new career.

In addition to her excellent academic record at the college, Lydia has enhanced her Bristol experience by serving as a peer tutor for the college's office administration degree program as well as an embedded tutor for Bristol's Early College program assisting BMC Durfee High School students through the program's opportunity for high school students to try college while earning college credits in a supportive environment.

She will continue her education at Bristol in the field of computer information systems with a focus on computer programming and web development and plans to transfer to a four-year institution to earn her bachelor's degree.

The college is proud to announce the following prestigious award recipients honored at Bristol Community College's 2021 Virtual Commencement Ceremony:

DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN AWARD



2021 Bristol Community College Distinguished Citizen – Fall River Fire Department Division of Emergency Medical Services (FRFD EMS Unit). Photo by BCC.

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 2021 Distinguished Citizen Award was presented to the Fall River Fire Department Division of Emergency Medical Services (FRFD EMS Unit)

When the coronavirus impacted the South Coast region, the Fall River Fire Department's Division of Emergency Medical Services (FRFD EMS Unit) was tasked with keeping our communities safe, with limited personal protective equipment (PPE). The unit rallied to collect and distribute the PPE and rapidly initiated a COVID-19 testing program to keep first responders as safe as possible. This combined effort has kept hundreds of first responders healthy and safe, enabling their dedicated service to our community without interruption.

In early August of 2020, the department's EMS unit, under the direction of Fire Chief John D. Lynch and EMS Director Timothy Oliveira, quickly volunteered to assist Bristol Community College develop an on-campus COVID-19 testing site and administered weekly COVID-19 testing for Bristol's hybrid students, faculty and on-campus employees who remained learning and working on-campus or in face-to-face learning environments, such as classrooms, labs and clinical settings.

This critical effort enabled Bristol to continue its mission to keep its college community, learning and working on campus, safe and make a seamless transition to a specialized COVID-19 testing service. The initiative also ensured that the college's students in degree programs requiring face-to-face components remained academically on-track for success.

The collaboration between the college and the Fall River Fire

Department has continued since Bristol's Fall River Campus began serving as the host location for a regional COVID-19 vaccination site, provided by the Fall River Board of Health and Fall River Fire Department Emergency Medical Services. This coordinated effort has resulted in an ongoing, large-scale COVID-19 vaccination for our region's qualifying general public and first responders.

Collaboration between Bristol Community College and the Fall River Fire Department is not new. The department has long supported the college's Fire Science Technology program with equipment demonstrations and instruction. The first two directors of the college's Fire Science Technology program were former Fall River Fire Chiefs Thomas Moore and Louis A. Shea and many of the program's instructors have served as ranking members of the department.

The Fall River Fire Department's Division of Emergency Medical Services (FRFD EMS Unit) responds to approximately 12,500 emergency calls annually. The department is highly rated as one of the best in Massachusetts by the Department of Public Health Division of Emergency Medical Services.

The college extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Fall River Fire Department's Division of Emergency Medical Services (FRFD EMS Unit) including Fall River Fire Chief John D. Lynch, Director of Emergency Medical Services Timothy Oliveira, Deputy Director of Emergency Medical Services Beth Faunce, EMS Captain Robert Camara, EMS Captain Jen Farias, EMS Captain John Morin, EMS Captain Jennifer Rodriques, EMS Lieutenant William Lonardo, EMS Lieutenant Nicholas Silva and the department's many dedicated paramedics.

HONORARY DEGREE OF ASSOCIATE IN HUMANE LETTERS



2021 Bristol Community College Honorary Degree – Elizabeth A. Poirier. Photo by BCC.

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education has granted Bristol Community College the right to award the honorary degree of Associate 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 – advancing a vibrant, diverse community through education, learner by learner.

This year's recipient is Elizabeth A. Poirier, for her support of higher education within the Commonwealth and dedication to the establishment and promotion of the college's Attleboro Campus location.

Elizabeth A. Poirier is the former Massachusetts State Representative representing the 14th Bristol district in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1999 to 2021. During that time, she also served as Massachusetts' Third Assistant House Minority Leader.

Elizabeth has lived in North Attleboro for her entire life and attended North Attleboro High School before graduating from Johnson and Wales University in Providence, R.I., where she earned a bachelor's degree in business. Prior to becoming a State Representative, Elizabeth worked for many years in the banking industry before co-owning a retail business in downtown North Attleboro.

While in office, State Representative Poirier's accomplishments included membership on the Special Joint Committee on Redistricting, the Foster Care Committee Caucus, the Special House Committee on Ethics, the Executive Committee of the House Women's Caucus and a special appointment to the House Commission on Child Abuse and Neglect. During this time, she also served as the Assistant House Minority Leader. She considers it the honor of a lifetime to have served the good people of the 14th Bristol District.

She is equally dedicated to her local community and has served as a board member and former Vice President of the North Attleboro/Plainville Chamber of Commerce, a board member and former President of the Downtown Associates of North Attleboro, and as a member of the Board of Directors for the Attleboro YMCA.

Elizabeth is the recipient of the Community Impact Award, presented by the North Attleboro High School Alumni Association in 2014; the Legislator of the Year Award, presented by the International Interior Design Association in 2019; as well as the New Hope President's Award, presented by the United Regional Chamber in 2020.

She is married to her husband, Kevin Poirier, Town Clerk of North Attleboro, who retires in early April this year. Mr. Poirier formerly served as Director of Development at Sturdy Memorial Hospital and as a Massachusetts State Representative for 23 years. She has three grown sons and six grandchildren. When she is not volunteering in her community, she enjoys reading and spending time with her family and friends.

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.

Manal Mogawer, RDH, MSD, BDS, Assistant Professor of Dental Hygiene and Sophomore Clinical Coordinator at Bristol Community College was selected by students to deliver the Last Lecture at Bristol's 2021 Virtual Commencement Ceremony.

GRAND MARSHALL

Silvino Ferreira, Associate Professor of Computer Information Systems and Victoria Revier, Coordinator and Professor of Medical Administrative programs at Bristol Community College, were honored to serve as the Grand Marshalls at Bristol's 2021 Virtual Commencement Ceremony. Continuing Bristol's tradition of awarding this honor to one of the college's longest-serving faculty or staff members, Ferreira and Revier will lead this year's graduates and proud viewers to the virtual commencement stage.

For more information about Bristol Community College's 2021 Virtual Commencement Ceremony, please visit www.bristolcc.edu/commencement.