



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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HCC Hosts 52nd Commencement Ceremony

WELDON, N.C. – On Saturday, May 11, the Dr. Ervin V. Griffin, Sr. Centre was full of blue caps and gowns. Halifax Community College (HCC) hosted its 52nd annual Commencement ceremony.

The speaker for the occasion was Anita Earls, Associate Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court. During her address to the graduates, Earls reminded them that the time is now for ending racism and division. She reminded students, using her own experiences as an attorney and civil rights activist, about the heroes of the past, and encouraged them to all be the heroes of the future.

Dr. Jeffery Fields, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Curriculum, recognized those students who graduated with honors. In addition, Arnette Davis, an instructor in the Medical Laboratory Technology (MLT) program was honored as the 2019 Excellence in Teaching recipient.

Allisha Hicks, Associate Dean of the School of Allied Health and Career and Technical Education, recognized the two recipients of the “Great within the 58” academic honor from the North Carolina Community College System office. This honor is bestowed upon the student from the graduating class with the highest cumulative grade point average. This year, HCC had two recipients, both of whom graduated with a 4.0 GPA. The recipients were Autumn Britton and Wenchan Song Dickens. Both recipients received their degrees from the MLT department.

A final recognition came from Dr. Michael Elam, president of HCC. He recognized two individuals who have been thought leaders and catalysts for change at HCC, bringing greater change to the Roanoke Valley. The 2019 Presidential Partnership Award recipients Steve Medlin, chair of the HCC Foundation board, and Michael Williams, executive director of Turning Point.

Once the time came for students to receive their certificates, diplomas and degrees, applause and cheers echoed throughout the Griffin Centre. A total of 416 credentials were awarded to the class of 2019, with multiple students receiving more than one. Each student receiving an Associate’s degree was hooded by a representative of their choice, with many selecting spouses, children or parents.

A particularly poignant moment came as the final two names of graduates were called. Michael Selle was a student at HCC nearly a decade ago. He took multiple classes and was pursuing an

Associate in Arts degree. However, he believed he had failed when he had to discontinue school due to medical issues. Recently, it was discovered that Selle had a terminal illness. In speaking to one of his former professors, James McCachran, Selle said he just wished he could have graduated. After doing some investigating, it was discovered that Selle had, in fact, earned enough credit for an associate degree, just not the one he originally sought. After 10 years, Selle walked across the stage and was hooded by his elderly mother – and the audience gave him a standing ovation.

The final name read was that of Ingrid Robinson. Despite physical challenges, and medical struggles that would have caused many to drop out, Robinson continued her studies. No matter what setbacks she encountered, she continued to push forward, working tirelessly toward her associate degree. When it came time for graduation, Robinson was worried that she would not be able to participate in the ceremony because she was in a motorized wheelchair. The administration of HCC ensured she would have her celebratory day. As her name was called, she wheeled herself across the stage, accepted her diploma and hood, and exuded a pride that cannot be described. Again, the audience was on its feet, celebrating for her as much as for themselves.

After taking the HCC Alumni Oath, students filed out of the Griffin Centre to “Happy” by Pharrell Williams. The gallery of the Griffin Centre was a sea of hugs and cheers, full of balloons and camera flashes.

The HCC class of 2019 set themselves apart through their hard work and dedication. There is no doubt that trend will continue. The Roanoke Valley has more proud graduates among its ranks – and the future looks even brighter.

Photo Captions for Attached Pictures:



1) Graduates during the ceremony.



2) Associate Justice Anita Earls



3) Wenchan Song Dickens receiving the NC Community College System “Great within the 58” academic honor



4) Michael Selle, hooded by his mother.



5) Ingrid Robinson being hooded

Halifax Community College's Mission

Halifax Community College strives to meet the diverse needs of our community by providing high-quality, accessible and affordable education and services for a rapidly changing and globally competitive marketplace.

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