



UNH Celebrates Most Sustainable Commencement May 23

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Graduates celebrate their achievements at the 139th commencement at the University of New Hampshire on Saturday, May 23, 2009. Photo: Mike Ross/Manager Photographic Services

DURHAM, N.H. - In what was called the most sustainable commencement in its history, the University of New Hampshire graduated the Class of 2009 Saturday, May 23, 2009, during a ceremony run on garbage.

UNH is the first university in the country to receive the majority of its power from landfill gas. UNH President Mark Huddleston officially launched EcoLine™ shortly before some 2,200 students received their diplomas at the 139th UNH commencement.

Through a live transmission, Al Davis of Waste Management's Turnkey landfill confirmed the ceremony was, indeed, being powered by the purified landfill gas piped from Rochester to UNH's cogeneration plant.

"This accomplishment has been years in the making and UNH is generating energy with what you have been throwing out over the last four years," Huddleston told students. "Anything organic that you haven't composted – apple cores, banana peels, etcetera – is helping to produce purified landfill gas to power our turbines."

"Sustainability is a core value at the University of New Hampshire and all of you have demonstrated your commitment to making the world a healthier place in which to live," Huddleston said.

Gary Hirshberg, president and CEO of Stonyfield Farm and a world-renowned speaker on sustainability, climate change, and socially responsible business, was the commencement speaker.

"UNH is an amazing place," Hirshberg said. "Whenever I have had the opportunity to visit this or your other campuses, I have been truly stunned by the caliber of your faculty, administration and staff, and the seemingly bottomless wells of ingenuity and excellence..."

Quoting Churchill, he sent students a message of perseverance.

"Success is the ability to move from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm,' and 'wisdom is something that you get just after you need it,'" Hirshberg said, citing Winston Churchill.

The New Hampshire native related the future facing most graduates as the same as the one he met when he started in business 26 years ago: broke, clueless about the future, and in debt.

In telling students to be determined and take risks, he quoted Albert Einstein, saying, "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."

Hirshberg joined Stonyfield Farm shortly after its founding in 1983. Initially, he directed the Rural Education Center, the small organic farming school from which Stonyfield was spawned. Previously, in addition to serving as a trustee of the farming school, Hirshberg had served as executive director of The New Alchemy Institute, a research and education center dedicated to organic farming, aquaculture, and renewable energy.

The Timberland Co. and former N.H. senator William Bartlett, Jr., received this year's Granite State Award for outstanding community service. Richard Verney of Monadnock Mills and Dennis Meadows, UNH faculty emeritus, received honorary degrees as did Hirshberg.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

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A photo is available for download at: http://www.unh.edu/news/img/Comm09_MWR8193.jpg

