

## Media Relations

May 16, 2015

### Medal of Honor Recipient Ryan Pitts Addresses 2015 UNH Commencement



More than 2,429 undergraduate and 485 graduate students received degrees at the University of New Hampshire's 145th commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 16, 2015. Credit: University of New Hampshire Communications and Public Affairs

DURHAM, N.H. – “Be courageous and appreciate courage in others who take action in the face of fear,” University of New Hampshire commencement speaker Ryan Pitts '13 said during the university's 145th commencement held Saturday, May 16, 2015. More than 2,429 undergraduate and 485 graduate students — including 44 military veterans — ranging in age from 20 to 79 years old and representing 43 states and 25 foreign countries received degrees.

Relating the combat actions during the 2008 Battle of Wanat in Afghanistan that earned him the Presidential Medal

of Honor, Pitts shared insights of courage, valor and dedication to his brothers in arms.

“I never imagined that I would be forced to fight while wounded, let alone that I was even capable of it,” he said. “I discovered that we can venture beyond the horizon of our perceived capabilities and do more than we ever thought possible.”

“Appreciate the contributions of others and the impacts they make in your life,” he said as he named the nine men who fought alongside him that day but did not survive.

Pitts, an Army Staff Sergeant and resident of Nashua, received the Medal of Honor from President Barack Obama in 2014. A 2013 graduate of the university's business program in Manchester, he also serves on the UNH Alumni Association advisory board.

In his welcoming remarks to graduates, their families and commencement guests, UNH President Mark Huddleston commended the class of 2015 for the commitment to service they share with Pitts.

“Members of this class have volunteered thousands and thousands of hours in service to others, from reading to middle school kids and stocking food pantries in New Hampshire to building homes in Haiti and encouraging reconciliation in post-war Bosnia,” he said. “You go into the Peace Corps and Teach for America and City Year and VISTA in numbers all out of proportion to the size of this

institution.”

Huddleston highlighted the service of three graduating seniors: Hamel Scholar Tim Marquis of Nashua, who excels in academics and makes time to volunteer at Portsmouth Regional Hospital and as a ski patroller at Crotched Mountain; Dover’s Verna Boudreau, who received thunderous applause when Huddleston announced she was graduating with an honors degree in English at age 79; and UNH Cat Pack Captains leader Peter Wilkinson of Lancaster, who snapped a selfie with Huddleston and the class of 2015 before leading the crowd in the “I believe in UNH” cheer.

“I could easily share more of your stories,” Huddleston said. “Thank you for all you have done—and for all you will do.”

Gerald Carmen ’52 and Hope Makris ’46 received UNH’s 2015 Granite State Awards, given in recognition of outstanding community service. Makris is the current owner of the NASWA Resort on Lake Winnepesaukee in Laconia, continuing to play an active role in the daily operations of the resort at age 90. Active in New Hampshire politics for more than 25 years, Carmen was chairman of the state’s Republican Party for three consecutive terms and for eight years was its representative to the Republican National Committee. From 1984-86 Carmen served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva.

Along with Pitts, nationally known portrait and landscape painter Richard Whitney ’68 received an honorary degree. Whitney has paintings hanging in more than 750 public and private collections throughout the U.S. and abroad and has painted more than 400 portraits, including numerous CEOs of industry, presidents of universities and educational leaders as well as family and individual portraits. Town and Country magazine recently named him one of the top dozen portrait painters in America.

The University of New Hampshire produced a total of 2,553 undergraduates and 634 graduate students across its three campuses in Durham, Manchester and Concord.

The [University of New Hampshire](http://www.unh.edu), 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 13,000 undergraduate and 2,500 graduate students.

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**Photographs available to download:**

<http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2015/05/images/2015-commencement-ryan-pitts01-1884.jpg>

**Caption:** Army Staff Sergeant Ryan Pitts ’13, a Presidential Medal of Honor winner, delivered the speech at the University of New Hampshire commencement Saturday, May 16, 2015, in Durham.

**Credit:** University of New Hampshire Communications and Public Affairs

[http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2015/05/images/img\\_0104-2-7624.jpg](http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2015/05/images/img_0104-2-7624.jpg)

**Caption:** More than 2,429 undergraduate and 485 graduate students received degrees at the University of New Hampshire’s 145th commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 16, 2015.

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<http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2015/05/images/stage-view-2304.jpg>

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### Commencement Videos

- [Full commencement ceremony video](#)
- [Ryan Pitts '13 delivers keynote address](#)

### Speaker Remarks

- [Read keynote Ryan Pitts '13 remarks](#)
- [Read President Mark W. Huddleston remarks](#)

### Related

- [UNH commencement website](#)
- [Photo galleries](#) from the 2015 UNH commencement
- View a [list of UNH graduates](#), broken down by N.H. county and region
- See a [Facebook gallery of decorated mortarboards](#) from the class of 2015
- [Read more about 2015 commencement](#) and keynote speaker Ryan Pitts

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