UNH Announces 2024 Commencement Speakers

Eight accomplished individuals will inspire and celebrate UNH graduates, and receive honorary degrees

Tuesday, March 26, 2024
The University of New Hampshire today announced the speakers for its commencement ceremonies this May.

“We look forward to having these successful individuals share their wisdom on the transition from college into the wider world and the value of a UNH experience,” UNH President James W. Dean, Jr. said. “It is always heartening to gather with students and their families to celebrate their academic achievements and welcome them to the Wildcat alumni association.”

The commencement speakers are:

**College of Liberal Arts — Katie Stringham Bouton ’96, CEO, Tavo & Former CEO, Koya Partners**

Katie Bouton has more than 20 years of experience in executive search and organizational development, building senior leadership teams at leading national and international organizations. Bouton founded Koya Leadership Partners in 2004 to recruit exceptionally talented leaders to mission-driven organizations. Koya has been recognized by Forbes as one of America’s Best Executive Recruiting Firms and by Hunt Scanlon Media as one of the top 50 fastest growing executive search firms.

**Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics — Ryan Day ’02, Head Football Coach for The Ohio State University**

Ryan Day is the head football coach at The Ohio State University, having guided the Buckeyes to a 45-6 record in four seasons (2019-22), including a 31-2 record against Big Ten Conference competition, back-to-back Big Ten championships in 2019 and 2020, and Sugar Bowl (2020) and Rose Bowl (2021) victories. Day has coached 18 first-team All-Americans, six consecutive Big Ten Quarterback of the Year honorees, five consecutive Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year honorees and five Heisman Trophy finalists. He has also coached 16 NFL Draft picks and nine first-round NFL draft picks.

**College of Health and Human Services — Christine McMahon ’94G, President and CEO, The Fedcap Group**
McMahon joined Fedcap in 2009 as president and CEO and has led the organization’s growth from a single-service New York City-based nonprofit to an organization with an international footprint. The Fedcap Group creates opportunities and improves the lives of people with barriers to economic well-being across four program areas: workforce development to include job training in high growth sectors, job placement and post placement supports; educational services for children, youth and adults; health services that promote stable participation in the workforce; and economic development targeted to helping people and communities achieve economic equity.

**College of Life Sciences and Agriculture — Michael Paglia Msc ’02G, Chief Technology Officer, ElevateBio BaseCamp**

Paglia is the chief technology officer at ElevateBio BaseCamp, a technology-driven company commercializing its enabling technologies, manufacturing capabilities and industry-leading expertise through partnerships to accelerate the development of genetic medicines to treat human diseases. He has more than two decades of experience in biotechnology, playing pivotal roles building and motivating process development and manufacturing teams, including having led the early process development and manufacturing of four approved autologous cell therapies.

**College of Professional Studies — Michael D. Smith, CEO, AmeriCorps National Service**

Michael Smith is the chief executive officer of AmeriCorps — the federal agency for service and volunteering. Smith has dedicated his career to social justice by reducing barriers and expanding opportunities for children and families in underserved communities, like those where he grew up. During his tenure at AmeriCorps, Smith has sharpened the agency’s focus on equity, investing in what works and uniting communities through the power of service. Previously, he served in President Barack Obama’s White House as special assistant to the president and senior director of cabinet affairs, overseeing the My Brother’s Keeper initiative.
and interagency task force. My Brother’s Keeper led to new federal policy initiatives and grant programs; tens of thousands of new mentors; more than 250 MBK communities; and more than $1 billion in private sector and philanthropic investments.

**Graduate School — Roger Stephenson ’79, ’83G, Northeast Regional Advocacy Director for the Climate and Energy Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists.**

Prior to his recent retirement, dual UNH alum Roger Stephenson’s last posting was as Northeast Regional Advocacy Director for the Climate and Energy program at the Union of Concerned Scientists. In his role at UCS, he worked with analysts and campaign managers to expand the program’s outreach and engage UCS supporters, Science Network members and community leaders to promote state and federal climate and clean energy policies.

**College of Engineering and Physical Sciences — Norbu Tenzing ’86, Vice President of the American Himalayan Foundation**

Norbu Tenzing has served as vice president of the American Himalayan Foundation, a nonprofit that brings shelter, safety, health and opportunity to people across the Himalaya, since 1993. The American Himalayan Foundation supports vital education, health care and cultural and environmental preservation throughout the Himalaya and each year touches the lives of 300,000 Sherpas, Nepalis and Tibetans.

**UNH Franklin Pierce School of Law — Kathi Vidal, Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office**

As Director of the USPTO, Vidal is working to expand American innovation for and from all, and to bring more ideas to impact. She leads one of the largest intellectual property offices in the world, with more than 13,000 public servants and an annual budget of more than $4 billion. She is the principal IP advisor to the President and the Administration, through the
Secretary of Commerce, and is focused on incentivizing and protecting U.S. innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity.

UNH’s Commencement ceremonies will take place between Friday, May 17 and Sunday, May 19, 2024, in the Whittemore Center Arena, with the exception of the UNH Franklin Pierce School of Law’s ceremony, which will take place in Concord’s White Park.

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