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Class of 2026 Commencements Celebrate Achievements and New Beginnings

By NCC

BETHLEHEM - The largest class of graduates since spring 2019 was honored during the May commencement ceremonies held on Bethlehem and Pocono Campuses.

There was much to celebrate this spring as the graduating Class of 2026 walked across the stages at Bethlehem and Pocono Campuses. This spring's class size tops the charts at 766 students, the largest since spring 2019. It's a class of diverse graduates ranging in age from 18 to 75 and hailing from locations all over the state, nation and world, from California to Kenya. Twenty-three of the graduates boast a perfect 4.0 GPA.

The May 19 Pocono campus ceremony was held in the Pocono campus gymnasium, and the May 21 Bethlehem campus ceremony was held in the Arthur L. Scott Spartan Center. Both rooms were filled with delighted family, friends, and mentors supporting the graduates on this momentous occasion.

President of NCC, David A. Ruth, Ph.D., said, "As you look around, I hope you see what I see. I see what success really looks like. Success is not one path, one definition, or one kind of story. No matter how big or small your achievements are, they are uniquely yours. What you all share, though, is that you showed up, you kept going, and you finished. You should all be so proud of arriving at this commencement stage," Dr. Ruth proudly said to the graduates.

The Spring Class of 2026 also included the first students to graduate from three NCC's newest health professions programs: cardiac sonography, vascular sonography, and respiratory care.

"I'm proud to report that all nine cardiac sonography grads, all four vascular sonography grads, and all 13 respiratory care grads already have jobs lined up!" Dr. Ruth told the audience.

During the Bethlehem campus ceremony, Larissa Fernandez Estevez, biological sciences graduate, addressed fellow graduates by saying uncertainty is not foreign to her. She expected to enter a university and pursue a degree in medicine, but financial strain on her family didn't allow her to do so right after high school in her home country of the Dominican Republic. "There is a powerful force behind uncertainty," she said. "It can cause enough pressure to turn you into a diamond. My struggles and small victories taught me growth comes from trial and error. We are stepping into a world full of uncertainty, but I challenge all of us to uplift each other as we're faced with uncertainty. Dare to stand tall in the middle of the uncertain."

Commencement speaker at Pocono's ceremony, Chris Barrett, president of the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau, said, "I'm so proud of you because you're going to go out in the world and conquer and achieve for the next generation. There's one thing I want to suggest as you start this. I want you to look inward and reflect on this moment, and reflect on the feeling of accomplishment. Keep that with you in your soul because you're going to need it when things get tough. You can rely on the inner strength you're beginning to build right now to get you through."

The President's Commencement Scholarship was awarded to Talia Ortiz (Bethlehem) and Hector Sabathie (Pocono), given in honor of each of the ceremonies' commencement speakers. Additionally, Maura Ceglia was honored with the Trustee Award. Ceglia was recognized by fellow students and faculty members for possessing outstanding leadership qualities.

Applause filled both ceremonies as graduates crossed the stage and accepted their diplomas.

NCC enjoys a long-standing tradition of involvement and participation by its alumni in every aspect of college life. Class of 2020, Laney Steele (Bethlehem) and Class of 2018, William Careri (Pocono), each welcomed graduates into the Alumni Association as they shifted their tassels from right to left.

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