

RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

Office of Communications and Public Affairs

Press Release

May 17, 2013

Contact: Anna Farneski

E-mail: afarnesk@ramapo.edu

Phone: 201.684.6844

Ramapo College 55th Commencement Ceremony Says Goodbye to 1,497 Graduates, Welcomes New Alumni at the IZOD Center

(MAHWAH, NJ) - More than 10,000 family members and friends gathered at the IZOD Center today to congratulate Ramapo College's Class of 2013, with a celebration of alumni - new and old.

New Jersey State Assemblyman Timothy Eustace (D-38), and a member of the Class of 1978 delivered the commencement address. Eustace, a chiropractor who received a scholarship to attend the College, urged graduates to be compassionate.

Eustace, and his partner, became the first openly gay couple to adopt from the State of New Jersey, when they adopted children impacted by the HIV and crack epidemics. Following a trip to Africa, the family established a charity and raised \$341,000 to build one school and begin building a second. Each year the family returns to work on the school.

"There is an old saying in Africa," he said. "If you want to go somewhere fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, take everyone with you. When all of you graduates go out there into the world, for the rest of your life, go far."

Among the 1,497 graduates, 373 received Latin Honors and 21 completed the College's Honors Program. Another 250 were recognized by the more than 40 academic honor societies.

President Peter P. Mercer told the gathering that the graduates were uniquely prepared by Ramapo College for the future.

"Thoughtful solutions will emerge from thoughtful people - people who have learned to look at problems from many perspectives and analyze them critically," said Mercer. "That, at one level, is what you have learned to do...to push the boundaries."

President Mercer, and George C. Ruotolo Jr., chair of the College's Board of Trustees shook each graduate's hand as they walked across the stage.

The ceremony honored alumni achievement throughout the program. As new graduates processed into the Center, they were joined by members of the Ramapo College Class of 1973 - the College's first class - who celebrated their 40th graduation anniversary on Friday. Ruotolo asked the group to stand for applause during his remarks.

Alison Banks Moore, Class of 1977, received the President's Award of Merit, which recognizes distinguished accomplishments by Ramapo College alumni. Banks-Moore is the Chief Diversity Officer EO/AA & Work Life Initiatives for Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey. She has more than 30 years as a Human Resources professional and has held positions at major corporations including AT&T, KPMG, Cablevision & 32BJ Benefit Funds.

Founding faculty member Tom Goss, a professor emeritus, was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree for his significant contributions to the development of Ramapo College's organization and recruitment, as well as his leadership in establishing interdisciplinary learning and faculty mentorship as tenets of a Ramapo education. He retired in 1997.

The Student Address delivered on behalf of the Class of 2013 was presented by Ellen Grocela of Westwood, NJ. She earned a bachelor's degree in Communication Arts with a concentration in Global Communications and Media.

Grocela spoke of the anticipation and excitement in waiting for an acceptance letter from Ramapo College and thanked the faculty for their devotion.

"They dedicate their lives to giving all students an education filled with enthusiasm and knowledge which can easily be taken into the real world. Ramapo College students really do receive individual academic attention," said Grocela. "From the Cahill Center preparing students for internships and future careers to professors encouraging students to submit their work to prestigious national conferences, Ramapo creates personalized opportunities that help its students grow."

To view photos from the ceremony visit: <http://ramapocollege.smugmug.com/Events/2013-Events>

Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as sixth in the Best Regional Universities North category, Ramapo College of New Jersey is sometimes mistaken for a private college. This is, in part, due to its unique interdisciplinary academic structure, its size of approximately 6,008 students and its pastoral setting in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains on the New Jersey/New York border.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The College also offers six graduate programs as well as articulated programs with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, New York Chiropractic College, New York University College of Dentistry, SUNY State College of Optometry and New York College of Podiatric Medicine.