



# **Eighty-Second Commencement Ceremony**

**Saturday, May 16, 2026  
10:00 a.m.**

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# **Eighty-Second Commencement Ceremony**

Saturday, May 16, 2026

*With Latin Honors*

## Order of Exercises

### **Academic Procession**

Bagpipes Traditional  
*William Stewart*

### **Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1**

*Sir Edward Elgar*  
The Mitchell College Festival Brass

### **Faculty Marshals**

Daniel Kresge, Ph.D.  
*Professor*  
*Division of Science*

Robert Forcier, M.B.A., C.H.E.  
*Associate Professor*  
*R. Carlson Division of Business*

### **U.S. Flag Bearer**

Alysson Schuyler  
*President*  
*Student Government Association 2026-2027*

Faculty Mace Bearer  
Nancy Bombaci, Ph.D.  
*Associate Professor*  
*Humanities*

### **The National Anthem\***

Mitchell College Select Chorus  
*Lyrics on page 14*

### **Invocation\***

Mike Kennedy, M.Div.  
*Ordained Elder*  
Church of the Nazarene  
*Spiritual Formation Curator*  
New England District Church of the Nazarene

### **Presidential Welcome**

Tracy Y. Espy, Ph.D.  
*President of the College*

### **Greetings from the Board and Introduction of Commencement Speaker**

Richard D'Avino, J.D.  
*Chairperson*  
*Mitchell College Board of Trustees*

### **Commencement Address**

Richard "Rich" Lisitano, M.S., RPh  
*President, L+M Healthcare*  
*Executive Vice President, Yale New Haven Health*

### **Presenting of Awards**

Richard D'Avino, J.D.  
*Chairperson*  
*Mitchell College Board of Trustees*  
Board of Trustees Award for Academic  
Achievement, Valedictorian

*\*Audience is asked to stand.*

Jonathan Babbitt, M.M.

*Assistant Professor*

*Humanities*

Faculty Award for Academic Achievement,  
Salutatorian

**Student Address**

Caleb Cobb '26

**Eternal God**

Mitchell College Select Chorus with

The Mitchell College Festival Brass

*Lyrics on page 14*

**Presenting of Candidates for Degrees**

Mika Nash, Ed.D.

*Provost*

*Chief Academic Officer*

Alicia V. Martinez, Ed.D., M.S.O.L.

*Vice Provost for Student Success and Innovation*

*Dean of Student Experience and Belonging*

*Chief Student Affairs Officer*

**Conferring of Associate Degrees**

Tracy Y. Espy, Ph.D.

*President of the College*

**Conferring of Bachelor Degrees**

Tracy Y. Espy, Ph.D.

*President of the College*

**Alumni Charge**

Mary C. Volpe '19, M.S.

*B.S., Mitchell College*

**Benediction\***

Mike Kennedy, M.Div.

*Ordained Elder*

Church of the Nazarene

*Spiritual Formation Curator*

New England District Church of the Nazarene

**Alma Mater**

Mitchell College Select Chorus

*Lyrics on page 15*

**Ringing of the Bell**

Alysson Schuyler

*President*

*Student Government Association 2026-2027*

**Recessional\*\***

The Mitchell College Festival Brass

*\*\*Please remain in place until the platform members,  
faculty, and graduates leave the seating area.*



## Commencement Speaker **Richard C. Lisitano, M.S., RPh**

Richard “Rich” Lisitano is the president of L+M Healthcare and executive vice president of Yale New Haven Health. He assumed his current role in July of 2023.

L+M Healthcare includes Lawrence + Memorial Hospital in New London, CT, and Westerly Hospital in Westerly, RI. In addition, L+M Healthcare includes a comprehensive ambulatory network serving Southeastern Connecticut and Southern Rhode Island.

Prior to becoming president at L+M Healthcare, Mr. Lisitano was senior vice president of Operations at Yale New Haven Hospital (YNHH). He has been employed at YNHH since 1986 when he joined the organization as assistant director of Pharmacy.

Throughout his almost 40-year career, Mr. Lisitano has an outstanding reputation for consistently optimizing operations, improving performance, and delivering sustainable financial results.

His contributions with Yale New Haven Health include growth in departments that include Genetics, Neurosciences, Oncology, and Urology. He was also the executive lead for developing, executing, and integrating an electronic medical record platform across each of the health system’s campuses.

Mr. Lisitano earned a Master of Science from The Ohio State University and a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy from the University of Connecticut.

A Connecticut native, he and his wife Ann are the proud parents of three young men.



## Mitchell College President **Tracy Y. Espy, Ph.D.**

Dr. Tracy Y. Espy became the eighth president of Mitchell College in July 2020, the first African American woman to hold the position. She brings more than 30 years of experience in higher education and servant leadership. Drawn to Mitchell College’s unique and powerful mission, President Espy is dedicated to providing access to quality higher education, increasing opportunities for a diverse student population, and meeting the workforce and service needs of the great City of New London and State of Connecticut.

President Espy has led the development and implementation of a strategic plan for the College that is focused on growth through continuous improvement to meet the learning needs of all students, including neurodivergent individuals and adult learners. Fostering a culture of service and community engagement for faculty, staff, and students alike, she has strengthened the College’s roots and increased its visibility and value both locally and regionally. In doing so she has expanded the College’s community partnerships throughout the state. Under her leadership the College received its largest-ever gift.

President Espy has led the development of many new programs to serve both traditional and nontraditional students and address the region’s most pressing

workforce needs. Most recent is the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program, which features the state-of-the-art Edward and Mary Lord Nursing Simulation and Skills Laboratory. Other programs created during her tenure include The Mitchell Hub for Digital Innovation & Educational Excellence, with a unique combination of online learning and in-person support for individuals and corporate groups seeking career skills and credentials. Other recent programs include Professional Studies, offering streamlined and supported degree completion to adult learners, and the post-graduate STAIRs program for neurodivergent individuals seeking support toward career, graduate school, and independent living.

Serving on the Governor’s Workforce Council and the Southeastern CT Enterprise Region (seCTer) board, President Espy works to address the workforce and economic development needs of the state and region. She is a member of the Executive Committee of the Connecticut Council for Independent Colleges and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, serving on the Student Aid Committee.

President Espy received her Ph.D. from Syracuse University, her master’s degree from Miami University of Ohio, and her bachelor’s degree from Berea College.

## Class of 2026 Honor Society Members

### **ALPHA CHI**

#### **National College Honor Scholarship Society (4-year)**

Fernanda Del Carmen Sánchez

### **ALPHA PHI SIGMA**

#### **Criminal Justice National Honor Society**

Jaileen N. Barber  
Casey Anna Tichy

### **ALPHA PSI OMEGA**

#### **National Theater Honor Society**

Julia Blair Alves  
Morgan Mary Frost  
Owen Matthew Murphy  
Timothy Albert O'Hayre  
Sofia Prada

### **CHI ALPHA SIGMA**

#### **National College Athlete Honor Society (4-year)**

Kiara Ampuero  
Taylor Whitney Bialowas  
Jenna Elise Blankenship  
Nicholas Louis Bracale  
John A. Brucato  
Olivia Emily-Demarais DeCicco  
Ransley Ferreras  
Archie Adam Gardner II

Christina Marie Housley  
Chelsea Sharaye Jackson  
Sarah Kathleen Latch  
Luca Christian Laurence  
Timothy Albert O'Hayre  
Aliannys N. Ortiz Plata  
Saviera M. Paige  
Cassandra Roman  
Charlotte Y. Rowley  
Fernanda Del Carmen Sánchez  
Thai-ler Anthony Sestokas  
Dominic Daniel Yarson

### **DELTA ALPHA PI**

#### **International Honor Society for All Fields**

Julia Blair Alves  
Catherine Olivia Ayer  
Joshua Bar-Nadav  
Olivia Grace Eshelman Bump  
Kevin Randolph Connelly  
Luke Anthony Demsey  
Jacob Daniel Faigel  
Morgan Mary Frost  
Melanie Hintz  
Chelsea Sharaye Jackson  
Sarah Kathleen Latch  
Luca Christian Laurence  
Alessio Francis Liberti  
Stephen Thomas Mallaney

Owen Matthew Murphy  
Alexander C. Nardone  
Kristina A. O'Hanlon  
Timothy Albert O'Hayre  
Morgyn Jessica Perkins  
Austin Harrison Polak  
Sofia Prada  
Charlotte Y. Rowley  
Ta'Naya Shaw  
Natalie Smith  
Zachary Philip Stock  
Brittney Marie Wheeler  
Grace Yeung

### **PHI EPSILON KAPPA**

#### **Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Sport Management National Honor Society**

Archie Adam Gardner II  
Cassandra Roman  
Thai-ler Anthony Sestokas

### **PSI CHI**

#### **Psychology National Honor Society**

Jaileen N. Barber  
Taylor Whitney Bialowas  
John A. Brucato  
Jacob C. Yoensky

## Degree Candidates

### Associate in Arts

#### Individualized Studies

Ruth Derezinski  
*Wellesley, MA*

Aleksandra Nikola Lapins  
*San Francisco, CA*

Ana Stephany Moran Custodio  
*Groton, CT*

Sofia Prada \*  
*New York, NY*

Declan Shea  
*Williston, VT*

Zachary Philip Stock \*  
*Larchmont, NY*

Brittney Marie Wheeler \*\*  
*Southbury, CT*

### Associate in Science

#### Computer & Data Information Systems

Andrew William Ayres  
McKenna \* (IA)  
*Essex, MA*

### Early Childhood Studies

Gabriela Yvonne Aquino \*\*  
*Oakdale, CT*

Jordan S. Epstein (IA)  
*Reisterstown, MD*

Emma Ort Stahl \*\* (IA)  
*Waterford, CT*

### Bachelor of Arts

#### Criminal Justice

Jaileen N. Barber \*\*\*‡  
*Waterford, CT*

Andrew Scott Champagne \*\*  
*Pawcatuck, CT*

Caleb Henry Cobb \*  
*Jewett City, CT*

Madison Morgan Dunn  
*Brooklyn, NY*

Guisseppie D. Satti  
*New London, CT*

Casey Anna Tichy \*  
*Easton, CT*

### Individualized Studies

Oscar A. Jacquot \*\* (IA)  
*Brooklyn, NY*

### Professional Studies

Ryan Alexa Cooper \*\* (IA)  
*Delray Beach, FL*

Corrinn T. Khoussa  
*Clayton, NC*

Kenia M. Mateo (IA)  
*New London, CT*

### Bachelor of Science

#### Applied Exercise Science

Jamyia Denesia Beddoe \*  
*New London, CT*

Jadon Canelli \* (IA)  
*Northford, CT*

Eleanore A. Corson \*\* (IA)  
*Ithaca, NY*

Matthew A. Fingal \*  
*Port St. Lucie, FL*

Kenneth Jonathan Lewis, Jr. (IA)  
*Windermere, FL*

Kenneth Rolando Miller, Jr. \*  
*New London, CT*

## Degree Candidates (continued)

### Business Management

Walker Cole Baillargeon \*\*  
Norwich, CT

Joshua Bar-Nadav \*\*  
Charleston, SC

Jenna Elise Blankenship \*\*  
Virden, IL

Corbett DeVivo Brassaw  
Mansfield, CT

Laiberth Stephen Contreras  
Trumbull, CT

Lauren Camille Cordero  
Selden, NY

Mahra Elizabeth Engdall \*\* (IA)  
Waterford, CT

Katelynn E. Goodman \*\* (IA)  
Virginia Beach, VA

Joseph Stephen Hayes \*  
Stonington, CT

Christina Marie Housley \*\* (IA)  
Virginia Beach, VA

Chelsea Sharaye Jackson \*\*  
East Hartford, CT

Luca Christian Laurence \*\*  
Greenwich, CT

Brandon Anthony Lee \*  
Stockton, CA

Julia Alayna Lent \*\*  
Miller Place, NY

Savier M. Paige \*  
Wethersfield, CT

David Lee Stallworth III  
New London, CT

Tanai Susan Williams  
Yonkers, NY

### Communication

Luke Anthony Demsey \*\*  
Cheshire, CT

Morgan Mary Frost \*  
Norwalk, CT

Melanie Hintz \*\*  
Bristol, CT

Matthew R. Keatley \*  
Waterford, CT

Alessio Francis Liberti \*\*  
Glen Rock, NJ

Jenica Anea Catherine  
McCauley-Logan \* (IA)  
New London, CT

Lavonte N. Morrell  
New London, CT

Alexander C. Nardone \*\*  
Wellesley, MA

Sean Patrick O'Donnell  
Terryville, CT

Timothy Albert O'Hayre \*\*  
Hull, MA

Ta'Naya Shaw  
Edgewater, NJ

Natalie Smith  
Massapequa Park, NY

Kassandra Steen  
Bethel, CT

(IA) In Absentia (not present)

\*Cum Laude (with honor)

\*\*Magna Cum Laude (with great honor)

\*\*\*Summa Cum Laude (with highest honor)

‡ Honors Program Scholar

## Degree Candidates (continued)

### **Criminal Justice**

Ransley Ferreras \*  
*Haledon, NJ*

Caitlin Marie Sullivan \* (IA)  
*Baltic, CT*

### **Early Childhood Education**

Olivia Grace Eshelman Bump \*  
*Columbus, OH*

Kevin Randolph Connelly \*  
*Scarsdale, NY*

Elda G. Hernandez \*  
*Groton, CT*

Stephen Thomas Mallaney \*  
*Madison, NJ*

Charlotte Y. Rowley \*\*  
*Bedford, NY*

### **Early Childhood Studies**

Julia Blair Alves \*\*  
*Portsmouth, RI*

### **Integrated Early Childhood Education – Leading to Teacher Certification**

Sarah Kathleen Latch \*\*  
*Hampstead, NH*

Kristina A. O’Hanlon \*  
*White Plains, NY*

Morgyn Jessica Perkins \*  
*Bristol, CT*

Gabriel Stanton-Catallo \*  
*Windsor, CT*

### **Health Science**

Justin Jamal Radford (IA)  
*Hamden, CT*

### **Hospitality Management**

Austin Harrison Polak \*  
*Maple Glen, PA*

### **Liberal & Professional Studies**

Casey James Johnson \*  
*Quaker Hill, CT*

Nicholas Joseph Litke \*\*  
*North Stonington, CT*

### **Marine Biology**

James Cardoso Nascimento (IA)  
*Bloomfield, CT*

### **Marine & Environmental Science**

Catherine Olivia Ayer \*  
*Nottingham, NH*

Olivia Emily-Demarais  
DeCicco \*\*\*‡  
*Haverhill, MA*

Matt J. Harty (IA)  
*Longmeadow, MA*

Arrianna Lee Stark \*\*  
*Schenectady, NY*

### **Psychology**

Kiara Ampuero \*  
*New London, CT*

Taylor Whitney Bialowas \*\*  
*Griswold, CT*

John A. Brucato \*\*\*  
*Cheshire, CT*

Jaylyn Isaiah Clardy (IA)  
*Pensacola, FL*

Joseph A. Garry \*  
*New London, CT*

## Degree Candidates (continued)

### Psychology (continued)

Saschia Jayne Johnson (IA)  
*Lisbon, CT*

Owen Matthew Murphy \*  
*Milton, MA*

Aliannys N. Ortiz Plata \*  
*Groton, CT*

Jonathan D. Parra-Tobey \*  
*New London, CT*

Grace Yeung  
*Belle Mead, NJ*

Jacob C. Yoensky \*\*  
*Groton, CT*

### Sport Management

Nicholas Louis Bracale \*  
*East Haven, CT*

Wilton Oheneba Causey \* (IA)  
*Worcester, MA*

Byron L. Dunn (IA)  
*Westerly, RI*

Jacob Daniel Faigel \*\*  
*Natick, MA*

Archie Adam Gardner II \*\*  
*North Charleston, SC*

Kilian O. Okech (IA)  
*Derby, CT*

Jacob James Quiles \*  
*Walkill, NY*

Cassandra Roman \*\*  
*New London, CT*

Fernanda Del Carmen Sánchez \*\*  
*Houston, TX*

Thai-ler Anthony Sestokas \*\*  
*Danbury, CT*

Adam Vartanian  
*Cumberland, RI*

Dominic Daniel Yarson  
*Ewing, NJ*

*Note: This program is not an official record of degrees and honors awarded. Degrees and honors conferred are not official until all academic work has been certified by the Mitchell College Office of the Registrar. The College's official registry for conferral of degrees is the student's permanent academic record kept by the Office of the Registrar.*

*(IA) In Absentia (not present)*

*\*Cum Laude (with honor)*

*\*\*Magna Cum Laude (with great honor)*

*\*\*\*Summa Cum Laude (with highest honor)*

*‡ Honors Program Scholar*

## Mitchell College Board of Trustees

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*Honorary Trustee*

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*President of Mitchell College*

Thomas Ruffing, M.E., M.B.A.  
*Treasurer*

Jason Guyot '03

## History of Mitchell College

ON SEPTEMBER 14, 1938, a group of New London citizens founded New London Junior College as a private, nonprofit, coeducational two-year college in their community. In 1950, the name Mitchell College was officially adopted by the trustees to honor the descendants of the Alfred Mitchell family, principal benefactors of the College since its founding. The high quality of Mitchell's academic program was recognized in 1956 when the College was awarded membership in the New England Commission of Higher Education. Taking a leading role in educating students with learning differences, Mitchell established its specialized learning center, now called the Bentsen Learning Center, in 1981.

IN 1998 the College offered its first baccalaureate program in the area of human development, and today the College offers 4-year degrees in 14 programs of study as well as two associate degrees.

In 2006 Mitchell launched Thames Academy (now Thames at Mitchell College). This distinctive program provides students who are neurodivergent or have learning differences or physical challenges a structured experience on a college campus to gain skills for a successful transition to college or other pursuits.

Another step in the continuum of support, the STAIRs post-graduate program is a living-learning option for neurodivergent learners who have completed a degree.

IN 2007 Mitchell College officially joined the Division III National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and was a founding member of the New England Collegiate Conference (NECC), where we earned championship titles across multiple years in many sports. In the 2023–24 academic year Mitchell joined the Great Northeast Athletic Conference (GNAC).

## The Mitchell Seal

THE MITCHELL SEAL, seen on the cover of this booklet, represents the educational mission and vision of the College. The Latin inscription “scientia” and “libertas” signify the two academic degrees: the sciences and the liberal arts. The lighthouse depicted in the center of the seal pays tribute to Mitchell's location on the Thames River at the mouth of Long Island Sound. The lighthouse and its beams of light symbolize both a beacon of guidance for students and their search for knowledge.

## Presidential Medallion

THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDALLION is a symbol of the authority entrusted in a president. Worn as part of the academic regalia at all formal occasions, this insignia of office prominently features the Mitchell Seal, declaring the president’s dedication to the educational mission and vision of the College.

## The Mace

DURING THE MIDDLE AGES the wood mace clad in metal was an effective weapon in battle, but as newer and more powerful arms developed, it was transformed into a symbol of dignity and authority.

THE EARLIEST CEREMONIAL MACES were borne by bodyguards of 12th-century English and French kings. By the end of the 16th century, they were used widely. The ceremonial mace is found in the British House of Parliament, carried before ecclesiastical dignitaries and in university and college convocations.

THE MITCHELL COLLEGE MACE was created by former faculty member Richard Ruth for the inauguration of President Bruce Swinburne in 1987. The mace precedes the president in processions and traditionally is carried by a senior faculty member. It represents the president’s responsibility as the chief academic and administrative officer of the College.

## Academic Regalia

AMERICAN ACADEMIC DRESS draws from traditions that date back to medieval European universities. Traditions were standardized in 1896 when the colleges and universities in the United States adopted a uniform code governing academic dress.

THE GOWN is normally black, although several colleges and universities have authorized optional gowns in the institution’s colors. The cut of the gown indicates the level of the degree. The bachelor’s gown is simple and recognized by its long, pointed sleeves. The master’s gown is fuller and its sleeves are square at the ends. The gown for the doctorate degree is more elaborate, cut full with velvet down the front and around the neck of the gown. The sleeves are bell shaped and decorated with three horizontal chevrons.

THE HOOD is the most distinctive feature of academic regalia. It was originally used as a shoulder cape and as a receptacle in which to collect alms. The length of the hood and width of its velvet border indicate the level of the degree. The color of the border indicates the field of study in which the degree was earned, and the inner lining bears the colors of the institution that conferred the degree.

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## The Star-Spangled Banner

Francis Scott Key (1779–1843)

*O say can you see, by the dawn's early light  
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight  
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.  
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

## Eternal God

John Rutter (1945–)

*Eternal God, we give you thanks for music,  
Blest gift from heaven to all your servants here on earth:  
In time of joy a crown, in sorrow consolation;  
Companion through our days of tears and mirth.*

*We give you thanks for every sound of beauty:  
For sweetest harmony that echoes in our hearts.  
For melodies that soar on high like birds at morning...  
For voice and instrument in all their parts.*

*As we are blest, so may our gifts bless others:  
May hearts be touched and spirits lifted up anew.  
Let music draw together those who live as strangers  
Bring joy to those we love, in thankfulness true.*

*And when at last we come into your kingdom,  
All discord over and all earthly labour done,  
Then sound and silence yield before one equal music,  
And with the Giver shall our souls be one.*

## The Mitchell College Alma Mater

Carlo Racamato (c. 1929–2008)

*On the banks of the Thames River,  
stands our College proud and wise,*

*Golden years we spend in learning  
and creating fond ties,*

*O'er the land and o'er the ocean,  
singing praises to the sky,*

*So we toast to thee, Mitchell College,  
loyalty will be our guide,*

*O hail to thee Alma Mater,  
and remember thee with pride.*

