

## Our connections make us strong

*A message from President Leo I. Higdon, Jr.*

›IN EARLY MAY, I hosted an event for graduating seniors at the Branford House at the Avery Point campus of the University of Connecticut. We were thanking the students for their record breaking 93-percent participation toward the senior class giving program. It was an extremely appropriate location for the celebration, I learned, since Morton Plant, the New London businessman whose summer home was Branford House, put down a million dollars in 1911 to establish Connecticut College's endowment.

It's been a pleasure over the past year to get to know many of the personal and institutional connections that give Connecticut College its own distinctive personality. I write these words just two days after presiding over my first Connecticut College Commencement where I was awed and a bit humbled by the traditions that are so uniquely CC.

As I urged our graduating class to stay connected to their College and their classmates, I saw evidence of many connections playing out in front of me. These, more than anything I could say to our graduates, demonstrate the bonds that develop among classmates and between alumni and the College. These bonds are what make us strong.

The connections that came to my attention over Commencement Weekend weren't necessarily the headline grabbers. Instead they were the personal, and very meaningful, things I saw or that people brought to my attention as they described the importance of the College in their lives. Traditions. Family ties. Memories. Hope for the future. It all came together during Commencement

to illustrate what the College means to those who are a part of it.

The College awarded the Connecticut College Medal to Carolyn Holleran '60, an alumna and emeritus trustee who has brought great honor to the College. Her many contributions to the College include endowing the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy. The College Medal is CC's highest honor, and Carolyn was appreciative and gracious in accepting it. But perhaps even more meaningful for Carolyn that day was being able to present a diploma to Katherine Williams, her granddaughter, who earned her own Connecticut College degree this year.

Margaret "Peggy" Sheridan '67 is the retiring Martha Bennett '73 Professor of Child Development. She spent 36 years as a faculty member here, plus another four as a student, and several additional years after her graduation as a "house mother." She also met her husband, Tony Sheridan '74, here and the two have been an integral part of CC and the southeastern Connecticut community ever since. At a dinner honoring retiring faculty and trustees, Peggy said she has been proud to be a part of the College's community spirit which spans generations.

At the same dinner, Jamie Rogers '04, a young alumni trustee elected by his classmates in 2004 to serve a three-year term on the Board of Trustees, said he would be stepping down from his role as a trustee, but he planned



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to be in New London often. One of his first visits, he said, would be in late August when he helps his younger sister Margaret move onto campus as a freshman.

At Baccalaureate, Professor Lawrence Vogel, chair of the philosophy department, was the student-elected keynote speaker. During his Baccalaureate Address,

Larry spoke about his mother and grandmother, both of whom were graduates of CC, in 1949 and 1919, respectively. He pondered how the Baccalaureate Address, "The Christ Who Came Too Soon," given during his mother's era would resonate in today's pluralistic community.

Then Larry posed a philosophical question about the role of Baccalaureate in today's College community, asking, "How can our celebration possibly be inclusive — true to our diversity — and also religious?" He found answers in connections. He said Baccalaureate is a nostalgic look back that is "religious" because it provides people an opportunity to express gratitude and reflect together on four years shared at Connecticut College. He urged graduating seniors to continue to share the connections forged as members of this community.

Together, these personal stories tell a powerful and moving story of a strong community bound not only by culture and tradition, but also by its members' enduring engagement. It's a community my wife Ann and I are proud to be a part of. I know you are, too.