Over 600 Students Welcomed at 2018 Honors Induction Ceremony

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Commonwealth Honors College welcomed first-year and transfer students during the 2018 Honors Induction Ceremony on August 31. This event is a kick off to the academic year and a time when the Dean of Commonwealth Honors College, along with Honors college faculty and staff, as well as leadership from across the University of Massachusetts Amherst campus, come together to celebrate new students, their family members and friends. During the Honors Pinning portion of the ceremony, students exchanged commemorative pins, marking their entry into the Honors college. Newly minted Commonwealth Honors scholars were then invited to take a moment to thank and embrace those who supported them along the way. UMass Amherst students entertained all in attendance, starting with a jazz quartet and ending with the Doo Wop Shop, the University’s oldest (and only all-male) A Capella group. The program also allowed speakers to share words of wisdom for the journey ahead.

Provost John McCarthy reaffirmed to parents the CHC pledge to “provide your children with a quality student learning experience with tremendous support and assistance along the way.” He then introduced the Commonwealth Honors College Dean, Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina.

“Today is a wonderful day,” said Gerzina. “In some ways, it is the end of a journey for you, of years spent with you and your families and friends and educators to prepare yourselves to be where you sit today. You have studied, worked, sweated, volunteered, and grown. But here we prefer to think of this day as the beginning of a journey, one that takes advantage of what you’ve already done, but takes you someplace new.”

Dean Gerzina not only encouraged the exploration of new paths but also of paths within the arts. “Culture attacks all certainties,” said Gerzina, quoting Hanif Kureishi, a British author and filmmaker. Through classes like Ideas That Change the World and many others, the CHC community aims to do the same.

Special guest Tina Brown-Stevenson, Senior Vice President of Health System Analytics and Decision Support for UnitedHealthcare (UHC) shared a unique alumni perspective, illustrating how lucky the new inductees were to be at the Honors college. Ms. Brown-Stevenson mentioned that it is a privilege to be a long-standing member of the Commonwealth Honors College Advisory Board and that she and her husband, Harry Stevenson, were honored to be able to fund a scholarship for Honors college students.

Jonathan Maciel ‘19, this year’s student speaker, reflected upon his own experience at the Honors college in order to encourage incoming students to reach for opportunities and goals they may have never anticipated or expected.

“Throughout my undergraduate experience thus far, I have constantly been asked, ‘what do you want to be when you graduate?’ I never really liked that question,” said Maciel. “Mostly because I never knew the answer, and standing here now, I’ve come to realize that’s okay. Many of you might feel the same way.”

Maciel challenged students with new questions. “I’d like for you guys to ask yourselves not ‘what do I want to be in life?’ but ‘what is it that I want to accomplish?’ Why are you here, and what do you want to gain from being here? What differences do you want to make?”