Over 6,000 attendees cheered on the graduating class of 2019 inside the Hampton University Convocation Center on Sunday, May 12. A total of 920 graduates donned with caps and gowns, walked across the stage to accept their diplomas, and look forward to the next step in their lives.

Hampton University President, Dr. William R. Harvey, welcomed the crowd of graduates, friends, families, and alumni to celebrate the accomplishments of the class of 2019. “I pay tribute to you for your many achievements and extend to you my very best wishes as you continue your quest for personal and professional fulfillment,” said Dr. Harvey. “I also extend to each of you my most sincere congratulations.”

Dr. Harvey spoke highly of the graduating class of 2019, and where they will go from here. “Hampton University provides its students with an education for life. The knowledge and skills gained during their tenure at this university, has enlightened and prepared them to be creators of original ideas. They are champions of change. Conquerors of new territories in liberal arts, education, math, science, politics and technology. So you, the graduating class of 2019, will be instrumental in moving our communities, our nation and our world forward,” Dr. Harvey said.

Keynote speaker, alumnus Lieutenant General Darrell K. Williams, class of 1983, delivered a powerful message about dreams to the graduating class. “I would encourage you to dream big and to live your own dreams. Starting today, remember that your life is your life and no one else’s. The world can only move forward when you follow your own dreams; this is the task of each new generation. You have to follow your dreams with passion, and no excuses,” Williams said. “I hope you appreciate how special this university is. The lineage continues. From one generation of Hamptonians to another, no matter where in the world, we

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Hampton University Celebrates the Class of 2019 Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Hampton University’s 149th Commencement Ceremony was an exciting and momentous day, especially for graduating seniors, Elisabeth Kuester and Jose Thomas, who were named Valedictorian and Salutatorian, respectively, for the graduating class of 2019.

Elisabeth Kuester – Valedictorian, 4.08 GPA

Kuester, originally from Milan, Italy, attended Hampton University as an international student, and a star athlete on the Pirates sailing team. She spent three years sailing for the team, where they earned straight bids to nationals, three years in a row.

An accounting graduate, she will start working in July at Goldman Sachs in London, as an Investment Banking Analyst on the Mergers and Acquisitions team. She speaks three languages: German, Italian, and English. Kuester took on two internships during her time at Hampton, one in New York and one at Goldman Sachs in London, which presented her with the opportunity to eventually be offered a full-time position at the prestigious company.

Kuester’s brother is Maximilian Kuester, Hampton University graduate class of 2018, who was also a star athlete for the sailing team and is now attending Cornell, working on a master’s degree in engineering.

Kuester worked hard to become valedictorian and she will remember giving her speech to the large crowd for years to come. “If you really put hard work into something, you can achieve anything,” Kuester said.

Jose Thomas – Salutatorian, 4.02 GPA

Thomas was born and raised in the Commonwealth of Dominica, and attended Hampton University as an international student. At Hampton, she majored in Economics with a minor in Leadership Studies. From a young age, Thomas displayed a keen interest in academic excellence, which extended into her undergraduate educational pursuits at Hampton. At the end of her primary education, she received a bursary to attend North East Comprehensive School and graduated with six academic awards, including best performance at the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) for successfully passing twelve CXC subjects.

On April 13, 2019, President William R. Harvey recognized Thomas during the 44th Honors Day Program as the recipient of the President’s Cup. Thomas was also a W.D.C. Harvey Scholar and traveled to Panama in 2018 for an eight-day international service learning and study abroad experience. She also received the President’s Award for her major and minor.

Outside of the classroom, Thomas made it a priority to delve into extracurricular activities. She spent her time over the past four years as a Campus Ambassador for Teach for America, as an on campus tutor for the Student Success Center, and as a Student Researcher and Vice President of the Student Research and Development Council (CXC) for successfully passing twelve CXC subjects.

After graduation, Thomas will head to Atlanta, Ga., to work as a Tax Associate for KPMG. Her long-term goal is to be Prime Minister of Dominica.

Hampton University Physical Therapy Graduate Ready to Take on the World

Shanice Reeves recently graduated from Hampton University with a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree. She has received several awards and accolades from the community of physical therapy, including the Dominion Physical Therapy Scholarship in 2019, and the American Academy of Physical Therapy Scholarship.

After receiving her undergraduate degree in Exercise and Sports Science at the University of Georgia, Reeves chose Hampton University to continue her education in physical therapy for two reasons: “The program at Hampton University is competitive and incredibly hard to get into and I was lucky enough to get accepted. I wanted to be more independent, to learn more about myself and focus on my studies so going out of state seemed like the right thing to do. Secondly, I just knew I wanted to experience what an HBCU was like and I’m incredibly glad that I did,” Reeves said.

Reeves is extremely driven and has an amazingly positive outlook on life. “When I first started the program, we were told that not everyone finishes, not everyone goes to the next level. I told my department chair that every single one of us will indeed finish. On Mother’s Day this year, all 25 of the students in my class that started this program, graduated,” Reeves said.

Reeves has also had many obstacles over the past three years that could have seriously derailed her educational path to success. There were two deaths in her family, including her aunt, who passed away due to colon cancer, and who Reeves took care of: “Her death took a big toll on me. I was planning to get my license in both Alabama and Georgia, so I could be close to my aunt and help take care of her. Despite all that, I still finished. I obtained two scholarships, am graduating with a 3.8 GPA, passed the boards and I’m officially a licensed physical therapist. I just have this drive that regardless of what comes at me, I will always come up on top, with the Lord’s help, of course,” Reeves said.

Reeves currently has three job offers in Georgia, and is trying to decide which company will be the best fit. She is also a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the American Academy of Physical Therapy, and the American Physical Therapy Association.

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Contributors: Matthew White, Glenn Knight, B. Da’Vida Plummer, Jessica Zimmerman, Alexis Brower
Sr. Cpl. Titus Sapp has worked with the Hampton Police Department for the past 18 years, and is showing others that it’s never too late to earn a college degree. Three years ago, Sapp decided to begin his degree due to a grant that was available to him for public safety majors. Thirty-three years after graduating from high school, Sapp has officially graduated with his college degree.

Born and raised in Hampton, Va., it was a lifelong dream of Sapp’s to receive his college degree, but was not able to attend college after high school due to working, then getting married and having kids. Sapp’s wife, Lisa Sapp, is a Hampton University graduate (c/o 1992). Two of his three children have college degrees and the third is currently in college. Thirty years after graduating high school, Sapp decided to go after his dream and pursue a bachelor’s degree in public safety through the University College.

The Hampton University – University College serves the learning needs of adults and other organizations. They offer degree programs, non-credit programs, certificate programs, online and more. With classroom locations dispersed throughout the city and online course offerings, Hampton University makes the educational resources of its academic and research units accessible to working professionals throughout the country.

Here is an excerpt from an interview with Sr. Cpl. Sapp:

**Q: What was it like going to school and taking college courses later in life?**

Sapp: I really feel that I was more disciplined, so I knew I needed to get this work done. If I had gone right after high school, I don’t think I would have been disciplined enough to get it done. I was more mature, and more focused now, as opposed to then. I knew my daughters had graduated, my wife had graduated and I wanted to be a good example to my son, who is currently in college.

**Q: Where do you go from here, professionally?**

Sapp: Once I get to 22 years at the police department, and once my son graduates from college, I am going forward to get my master’s degree, in hopefully social work. I want to work with young people, do some type of counseling. I would also like to run for city council, so that’s something else I’m looking at. I’m busy in the community already, since I’m with the community engagement unit at the police department and I get to meet people every day.

**Q: What else do you want to add?**

Sapp: The Hampton University – University College, has been really wonderful. Ms. Alisha Foster, Mr. Kevin Marrow and the rest of the staff and professors, if there was anything you ever needed, they responded quickly and efficiently. It’s been a great experience for me. I would tell anyone, that it’s never too late to get your education. If you fail, it’s because you failed yourself. But if you stay focused, be on task, and be disciplined, the opportunities that Hampton affords you is wonderful.
Hampton University Science Graduate Heading to Sweden

Hampton University graduate (class of 2019), Olivera Stojilovic, from Novi Sad, Serbia, is heading to Sweden for graduate school with a full-ride scholarship. A Marine and Environmental Science major in the Hampton University School of Science, international student and a Lady Pirate volleyball athlete, Stojilovic, graduated with a 3.88 GPA, and will be attending graduate school at Lund University, where she will be majoring in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science.

Stojilovic received a full-ride, four-year scholarship to attend Hampton University, and to play on the volleyball team. She also spent one season on the sailing team. Now, her focus will be on her studies during her graduate program at Lund University.

“I am passionate about the United Nations’ sustainable development goals, which are things like world hunger, peace on the planet, gender equality, etc., so my master’s is intertwined with answering how to achieve those. I really want to make a positive impact on our society,” said Stojilovic. “I also want to pursue a Ph.D., and I would love to attend the University of Amsterdam, but we will see what happens in the future.”

While at Hampton, Stojilovic was a member of the Strategies for Ecology Education, Development and Sustainability (SEEDS) Program, the marine science club, was President of the International Office, attended the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography conference, and even traveled to Egypt.

Stojilovic will leave Hampton with great memories and boundless knowledge that no one can ever take away from her. “I once read a book while at Hampton, and it said, ‘a tree doesn’t make a forest.’ It showed me what people can do when they work together. Hampton taught me how to depend on people and try to get the best out of them. I learned to value myself while valuing others. That’s why I think Hampton has become my forest,” Stojilovic said.

Hampton University Business Graduate on the Rise

As a small town girl from Asheboro, North Carolina, Mikayla Trogdon is one of Hampton University’s rising stars with a bright future ahead of her. She graduated with her Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from the James T. George School of Business on May 12th.

Trogdon graduated Cum Laude, maintaining the dean’s list throughout her tenure at Hampton University. She was a member of the Greer Dawson Wilson Leadership Training Program, Co-President of the Leadership Application Program, a Hampton University Presidential Fellow, and a 2017 initiate into the Gamma Iota Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Hampton University provided more for Trogdon than just an education; it helped her become who she is today. “Hampton taught me that I am my biggest obstacle. When I move myself and my fears out of the way, there is nothing I can’t accomplish,” said Trogdon. “The MBA program taught me how to make the curriculum and my internship experiences cater to my own professional goals. Everything at Hampton is what you make it.”

As a very passionate individual, Trogdon aspires to help others throughout her professional career. She joined the 5-Year MBA program with a goal to merge her passion with her profession through emergency management. In 2017, she spent her summer interning at the Randolph County Family Crisis Center in Asheboro as a Finance and Human Resource intern. The following summer, she spent three months in New York City interning for Cantor Fitzgerald, an innovative global financial services firm, as a Summer Analyst.

Trogdon cherishes her undergraduate experience, and has appreciated the peers that she has made along the way. “My experience at Hampton has helped me realize that I have a great amount of people in my corner. Hampton alum will look out for you and always have your best interest at heart. I have learned about hard work, time management, and how important it is to be present. As a student, you’re very busy, but we all are. I made sure to still be present with my extra-curricular activities on campus even during the times I had a lot of school work to do. You never know what impact your presence can have. I’ve also learned not to over commit and that it’s okay to say no,” Trogdon said.

Trogdon will continue to intern for Cantor Fitzgerald this summer to finish her graduate internship and beginning Fall 2019, she will return to Hampton University to earn her master’s degree in business administration.

“The 5-Year MBA program is what made Hampton University my first choice. Earning my MBA will allow me to be more marketable within my profession. I’ll have two degrees and throughout the graduate program, I will have a holistic understanding of business as a whole,” said Trogdon.

Fun Fact: Mikayla played four years of varsity basketball in high school as a small forward where she averaged a double, double.

First Generation Hampton University Grad on Her Way to the Ivy League

A native of Houston, Texas, Timia Whitsey is one of Hampton University’s newest graduates, earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism with a minor in cinema studies from the Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications. Whitsey has been selected as an HBCU fellow for the master’s program at Columbia University’s School of Professional Studies. As a fellow, Whitsey will receive full tuition, free housing, an assigned industry mentor and career coaching. Whitsey will be working towards a master’s degree in Strategic Communications, class of 2020.

Graduating Summa Cum Laude, Whitsey made sure to leave a lasting mark on her ‘Home by the Sea.’ As a very involved student, she was a member of the Southwest Pre-Alumni Council, English tutor for the HU writing lab, senior co-facilitator for the Greer Dawson Wilson Student Leadership Training Program, and a 2018 initiate into the Gamma Theta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Whitsey is a first generation college student and has learned a great deal from her Alma Mater. “The opportunities that Hampton provides, I have never had these types of opportunities back home. No one in my family has gone to college, so HU is all I know. Being a part of the student leadership training program, I learned the essence of professionalism, which is something I wouldn’t have gained had I not come to Hampton,” said Whitsey. “HU teaches you perseverance, the value of tradition, family, and networking. The Hampton love is so real. I made sure to make the most out of my experience here.”

Throughout her tenure at Hampton University, Whitsey was a writer, anchor, and reporter for WHOV-TV News watch, intern for Favor Multimedia, and an Assignments Intern for ABC13 in Houston, Texas. She was the director of two Hampton University pageants, and a writer and director for on-campus plays.

As an inspiring television writer, Whitsey has plans to attend and volunteer at the American Black Film Festival in Miami, FL. “I don’t want to limit myself in the film industry. Whether its horror, comedy, or something based on a true story, I just don’t want to limit my writing to one specific genre. Most of my writing comes from my dreams. So far, I’ve written two scripts and two plays for HU Black History Extravaganza. I also do a lot of writing in my spare time,” Whitsey said.

Fun Fact: During her senior year, Whitsey started a cooking business called, Whipped by Whitsey.”