TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-SIXTH

Commencement Exercises

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
THE THIRTIETH OF MAY
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-THREE
Invocation
Alison L. Boden
Dean of Religious Life and of the Chapel

Greeting
Christopher L. Eisgruber
President of the University

Latin Salutatory Oration
Annabelle Duval
The Latin salutatory is awarded by vote of the faculty to one of the highest-ranking candidates for bachelor degrees. The special qualifications of a student as salutatorian are taken into account, as well as scholastic standing.

Secondary School Teaching Prizes
Recognition, by Provost Jennifer L. Rexford, of recipients of prizes for distinguished secondary school teaching in the State of New Jersey.
Wahab Ashraf, Science Park High School, Newark
Bob Fenster, Hillsborough High School
Maria Maloupis, Lyndhurst Middle School
Nancy Picinic Ricca, Pasack Valley High School

Bachelor Degrees
Presentation to the president, by Dean of the College Jill S. Dolan, of candidates for bachelor degrees; conferral of the degrees by the president.
Bachelor of Arts
Bachelor of Science in Engineering

Valedictory Oration
Aleksa Milojčić
The valedictory is awarded by vote of the faculty to one of the highest-ranking candidates for bachelor degrees. The special qualifications of a student as valedictorian are taken into account, as well as scholastic standing.

Advanced Degrees
Presentation to the president, by Dean of the Graduate School Rodney D. Priestley, of candidates for advanced degrees; conferral of the degrees by the president.

The President’s Awards for Distinguished Teaching
Recognition, by Dean of the Faculty Gene A. Jarrett, of recipients of awards for sustained records of excellence in undergraduate- and graduate-level teaching by Princeton University faculty members.

Jesse Gomez, Assistant Professor of Princeton Neuroscience Institute
Rosina A. Lozano, Associate Professor of History
Claire E. White, Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and the Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment
Tamsen O. Wolff, Associate Professor of English
Honorary Degrees
Presentation to the president of the candidates for honorary degrees by University Orator and Charter Trustee, Dr. Laura L. Forese; conferral of the degrees by the president.

Lynn A. Conway
Doctor of Science

On the verge of a breakthrough while working at IBM in 1968, the talented young engineer was fired after confiding to supervisors that she was transgender. She successfully rebuilt her career as a computer scientist and helped revolutionize microchip design in the 1980s, leading to high-tech advancements that helped transform society and continue to impact our lives today. After groundbreaking work in industry and government, she taught the next generation of computer scientists as a professor and associate dean of engineering at the University of Michigan. Decades passed before she felt comfortable sharing the discrimination she’d experienced early in her career, becoming a vocal advocate for transgender rights and an inspiration to LGBTQIA scientists worldwide. And in 2020—52 years after her firing—she received a formal apology from IBM, along with the company’s lifetime achievement award for her “pioneering work” in computers.

Arcadio Díaz-Quiñones
Doctor of Humane Letters

One the most prominent public intellectuals of his time in Caribbean studies, he is also a beloved teacher who has inspired generations of undergraduate and graduate students at Princeton and beyond. A prolific writer and scholar, his essays are classics in the Latin American and Latino/Latina modern literary canon, and his scholarship has played a seminal role in creating literary and social justice networks across the Americas. Two of his regular offerings at Princeton, “Introduction to Spanish American Literature” and “Introduction to Latin American Poetry,” became legendary courses on campus. Under his direction for six years, Princeton’s Program in Latin American Studies became a world-class area studies program and a dynamic community of diverse scholars, writers, artists, and policy experts, along with undergraduate and graduate students.

Rhiannon Giddens
Doctor of Music

Named by NPR as one of the 25 Most Influential Women Musicians of the 21st Century, she has dedicated her career to raising up voices that have been overlooked or erased. Discovering the history of African American string bands as a young musician changed the trajectory of her career—as she devoted herself to introducing new audiences to the Black banjoists and fiddlers whose influences have been left out of the historical narratives surrounding folk and country music. As a singer and multi-instrumentalist, her achievements are as diverse as the musical styles she performs. A two-time Grammy Award winner, she is also a Pulitzer Prize recipient and a MacArthur “Genius.” Her roles include artistic director, composer of opera, ballet, and film, children’s book author, and television host and actress. Few contemporary artists have done more to connect overlooked musical traditions of America’s past with music being performed today.

Suzan Shown Harjo
Doctor of Humane Letters

A tireless advocate at the center of almost every Native American legislative, legal, and cultural issue over the past half-century, her work has led to the protection of rights, cultures, and sacred places, and the return of more than one million acres of Indigenous lands. She is an activist, poet, journalist, curator, playwright, and more—and the force behind the decades-long movements to Indigenize Native place names and to remove sports team names and mascots that stereotype or disparage Native Peoples, from high schools to the National Football League. In awarding her the 2014 Presidential Medal of Freedom, President Barack Obama said it best: “Because of Suzan, more young Native Americans are growing up with pride in their heritage, and with faith in their future. And she has taught all of us that Native values make America stronger.”

Katalin Karikó
Doctor of Science

It was while studying biology in the late 1970s at the University of Szeged in Hungary that she became interested in the molecule that would define her career and help lead to the creation of new vaccines aimed at thwarting a global pandemic. However, it would be decades before she and her University of Pennsylvania research partner, Dr. Drew Weissman, were able to show the infinite potential of that molecule—called messenger RNA. When her lab in Hungary closed, the young scientist immigrated to the United States with only $1,200 hidden inside her daughter’s teddy bear for safekeeping, determined to continue her research on mRNA. After years of professional and personal setbacks, and facing many doubters within the scientific community, she and Weissman were able to create the modified version of mRNA that provided the foundation for a landmark in vaccine development. Her dedication, determination, creativity, and resilience inspire all of us to persevere with our most audacious ideas.
Remarks by the President of the University

Christopher L. Eisgruber

Benediction

Theresa S. Thames
Associate Dean of Religious Life and of the Chapel

Alma Mater

Old Nassau
Tune ev’ry heart and ev’ry voice,
Bid ev’ry care withdraw;
Let all with one accord rejoice,
In praise of Old Nassau.

In praise of Old Nassau, we sing,
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!
Our hearts will give
while we shall live,
Three cheers for Old Nassau.

Recessional
The audience will please remain in place until the academic procession leaves the stadium.

AVETE ATQVE VALETE

In Memoriam
The University remembers here with great sadness two members of the Class of 2023.

Jazz Chang
Kevin Chang

A Commentary on Commencement

Princeton traces its founding to a royal charter granted on October 22, 1746, by King George the Second of England. The first Commencement Exercises were held in 1748, in Newark, then home of the College of New Jersey, as Princeton was originally called. Six students were graduated at the first Commencement. One of Princeton’s first graduate students was James Madison 1771, later the fourth president of the United States. He remained at the college after graduation to continue his studies with President John Witherspoon, who was the only college president as well as the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence. Systematic graduate instruction began in the 1870s, and the Graduate School, as it is known today, was formally organized in 1900.

Princeton’s Commencements have been held in late spring only since 1844. Before then the ceremony took place in the fall because the College was in session all summer long. Since the College moved to Princeton in 1756, Commencement has been held in a variety of locations on or near campus, including Alexander Hall, the First Presbyterian Church, and Nassau Hall. From 1922 until 2019, the front lawn of Nassau Hall (known as front campus) was the site of Commencement, weather permitting. Commencement was held for the first time in Princeton Stadium in May 2021.