

Student stories lead 33rd UMass Lowell Commencement Ceremonies

Across 5 colleges, 4,500-plus receive degrees to cheers of family and friends

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Members of the UMass Lowell Class of 2024 watch and listen in anticipation as Provost Joseph Hartman delivers closing remarks at the conclusion of the commencement ceremony. (Aleah Landry photo)

By [SUBMITTED ARTICLE](#)

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LOWELL — Archange Lombo declared as a computer engineering major in 2020 while classes were still being held remotely and he hadn't met many of his fellow students. This memory, however, is not tinged with remorse. The Worcester resident and UMass Lowell senior looks back on the early accomplishments of his college journey fondly.

“The pandemic kept us closed in our rooms, but that saved time for projects. I built a night light, a Christmas music gadget — anything the electronics kit allowed,” said the budding engineer who spent every moment of his free time exploring the field.

“Truthfully, that fueled my passion. It felt like a treasure hunt, where every discovery was a reward,” Lombo told Francis College of Engineering, Kennedy College of Sciences, and Zuckerberg College of Health Sciences graduates at UMass Lowell's Saturday morning Commencement ceremony.

In many ways, Lombo's anecdote encapsulates many of the UMass Lowell Class of 2024's experiences. This weekend, the greater UMass Lowell community — including family and friends — cheered as the Class of 2024 completed their college journey.

Forty-one states and 106 countries are represented among the more than 4,500 graduates of the Class of 2024. Among undergraduate members of the Class of 2024, nearly 800 are the first in their family to graduate from college.

In addition, 190 students graduated with a perfect 4.0 cumulative GPA, 53 of whom received bachelor's degrees, 117 master's degrees and 20 doctorates.

In her second Commencement as UMass Lowell chancellor and the university's 33rd ceremonies, Julie Chen spoke to students about the importance of looking ahead and planning for the next chapter.

"Look to the future and ask yourself: How am I going to get better? What am I doing to improve myself, my community, our society, our world? As an institution, we do this constantly. We ask ourselves: What's next for UMass Lowell? Whether it's through research or working with our partners in the City of Lowell to create the Lowell Innovation Network Corridor, or our many collaborations with industry — UMass Lowell never sits still. And neither should you," she said.

The university's weekend-long celebration is made up of three Commencement ceremonies and student speakers were at the center of each. In addition to Lombo, Abigail Drezek, who received a doctorate in physical therapy, gave the Commencement address at Friday's ceremony for doctoral and master's degree recipients while Cassidy DeMalia, who graduated Saturday afternoon with a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice, addressed graduates of the College of Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the Manning School of Business.

Playing on family rivalry, Drezek, a triplet, described attending and graduating from UMass Lowell as an opportunity. "An opportunity to learn, grow, and compete," said the Cumberland, Rhode Island, resident. Tipping her mortarboard to the executive cabinet, she thanked them for the opportunity to hang on to the "favorite child status" a little longer.

"Better luck next time, bros," she said to loud laughter.

DeMalia also spoke of family ties. She brought the audience back to her freshman-year dorm room moments after her parents said their goodbyes. Little did she know, her mother had tucked an envelope under her pillow with a letter extolling her pride and admiration for her daughter. DeMalia wanted to pass on that praise.

"You've navigated through some of the most memorable years of your life, overcoming challenges, hardships, and difficulties," the Shrewsbury native told her fellow classmates. "Despite the uncertainty, no matter how lost you may feel or how far you may have to go, this community will always be here for you."

AWARDS & DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Distinguished guests were recognized along with top student award winners throughout the weekend-long celebration.

A visionary leader who has left an indelible mark on the global technology landscape, Rich Miner already has three UMass Lowell degrees to his name. Saturday marked the addition of a fourth when the Android co-founder was awarded an honorary degree.

In 2022, Miner's generous \$5 million donation led to the naming of the Richard A. Miner School of Computer & Information Sciences at UMass Lowell, a testament to his enduring legacy and commitment to his alma mater. The school is home to nearly 1,600 undergraduate students and more than 300 graduate students, making it the largest academic program on campus. Last fall, the school hosted its first Miner School Research Symposium, where Miner spoke with students about his transformative experience at the university.

Three members of the university's alumni community were also recognized with distinguished alumni awards. They are: Lorna Boucher '86, Richard "Rick" Hoeske '66 and Janis (Erickson) Raguin '92.

Five Chancellor's Awards were presented at this year's ceremonies. The following individuals and groups were recognized:

- Chancellor's Medal for Public Service and Civic Engagement: Yun-Ju Choi
- Chancellor's Medal for Public Service and Civic Engagement: Carol Duncan (posthumous)
- Chancellor's Medal for Public Service and Civic Engagement: Karen Frederick
- Chancellor's Medal for Outstanding University Support: Philip Sisson
- Chancellor's Medal for Outstanding University Support: Hanscom Air Force Base

Additional awards were granted throughout the two-day celebration. A complete list of distinguished guests and graduating seniors with top academic achievements can be found at uml.edu/commencement.