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News Release

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New England's first wind power graduates are among record number of students to earn degrees at NMCC Commencement May 14; Bangor Hydro leader to speak

Aroostook County – A record number of graduates, including the first associate degree wind power technology students trained in New England, will be among the highlights of commencement exercises at Northern Maine Community College on May 14.

The 274 students earning a total of 290 associate degrees or certificates will also take part in another first: the first commencement ceremony held off campus in more than a generation. As enrollment has grown in recent years to an all-time high of more than 1,100 students, the venue used to hold the event for more than three decades, the College gymnasium, will give way to The Forum in Presque Isle for the class of 2011.

“In a year set aside to celebrate milestones, as we mark the 50th Anniversary of the founding of NMCC, commencement will be especially meaningful,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. “The significance of all we do to fulfill our mission to provide high quality, affordable education and contribute to the economic development of our region and state is manifested in our largest-ever graduating class. In addition, our significant efforts to contribute to the development of the growing alternative energy industry sector are bearing fruit as we send our first wind power technology graduates into the workforce.”

Fourteen NMCC students will become the first to earn an associate degree in wind power technology from a higher education institution in Maine. According to program instructor Wayne Kilcollins, companies involved in wind and other alternative energy industries, both in-state and out-of-state, have been recruiting graduates for employment.

Alternative energy and the changing energy landscape in Maine will also play prominent in the commencement address that will be delivered by Gerard Chasse, president and chief operating officer of Bangor Hydro Electric Company. Bangor Hydro is owned by Emera Inc., the Halifax-based energy services company that acquired Maine Public Service Company late last year. Operating as sister utilities, Bangor Hydro and Maine Public Service Company serve more than 150,000 customers in Northern and Eastern Maine.

Prior to his appointment as president and COO, Chasse served as Bangor Hydro's executive vice president of operations. He joined Bangor Hydro in 1990 as an electrical engineer in the substation engineering department and has held numerous positions of responsibility within the engineering group. He was promoted to the position of manager of engineering in 2002 and became a member of the company's senior management team. In this capacity, he was responsible for all engineering activities associated with Bangor Hydro's power system.

In December 2007, Chasse and his transmission development team completed the engineering and construction of the Northeast Reliability Interconnect, a 150 mile, international transmission project.

Chasse serves on the Board of Advisors for both the College of Engineering and the School of Business at the University of Maine. He attended the University of Maine at Orono and graduated in 1990 with a Bachelor's of Science in Electrical Engineering. He is a registered professional engineer.

The Winslow, Maine native lives in Hampden with his wife and two children.

Also speaking during the commencement ceremony will be Dustin Graham of Mapleton, a graduating senior in the college's liberal studies program. Graham, who has been named NMCC's 2011 'Student of the Year,' is a 2009 graduate of Presque Isle High School, who has excelled both academically and in service to the campus and community during his two years at NMCC. Graham intends to continue his education at the University of Maine this fall, where he will enroll as an elementary education major.

Commencement exercises at NMCC will be held on Saturday, May 14, at 10:00 a.m. at The Forum on Mechanic Street in Presque Isle. Tickets are not required for general admission seating.

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Gerard Chasse