



News Release

Contact:
Jason Parent
Development and
College Relations Office
33 Edgemont Drive
Presque Isle, ME 04769
Phone: (207) 768-2808
Fax: (207) 760-1101
jparent@nmcc.edu

May 14, 2011
NR11060

NMCC awards degrees; New England's first wind power technology graduates among class of 2011

Aroostook County - Two hundred seventy-four graduates were awarded associate degrees and certificates during Northern Maine Community College commencement exercises at The Forum in Presque Isle on Saturday, May 14. The class of 2011 included 14 graduates from the wind power technology program. The academic offering is the first of its kind at a post-secondary education institution in New England.

Also comprising one of the largest-ever graduating class in the five decades since NMCC was founded in 1961 were 18 former displaced workers who began their studies at the College in March of 2009. At that time, NMCC offered an entire special semester of course offerings tailored to laid-off workers. The classes were designed mainly for those in the forest products industry who had received furlough notices in the days before or weeks after the traditional start of the College's spring semester that January.

Sharing advice and words of wisdom with the graduates was featured speaker 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.

"Education is the foundation of a progressive society. It is also one of the cornerstones of a vibrant and growing economy. Today you are helping to cement Maine's future as a healthy, prosperous economy. Today also marks the end of your student life here at Northern Maine Community College and the beginning of a long career filled with optimism and opportunity," said Chasse in his address.

He spoke of twists and turns along the way and new opportunities on the horizon, such as renewable energy. "Changes in the energy landscape, both in Maine and the region, are abundant and promising. Those who help create or adapt quickly to these changes will benefit from the opportunities that result," he told graduates.

Also speaking at commencement was NMCC's "Student of the Year," Dustin Graham of Mapleton. The 21-year-old earned an Associate in Arts degree in liberal studies. He was recently honored along with six other students from Maine Community College campuses across Maine at a ceremony in Augusta.

"Northern Maine Community College is not only a first college experience for a student such as myself, it is also a place for second chances, or even third or fourth chances. One thing I have learned while at NMCC is that it is never too late to learn or to receive an education," said Graham to his fellow graduates.

Graham left his classmates with this advice: "whatever you take on in life from this point forward, whether it be your job or something else you become involved in, do it with passion. Don't do it for the glory, or the credit, do it because you truly enjoy it and it makes you happy. Living life complaining and doing something you hate keeps you down, but living life with passion, a positive attitude, appreciation for the little things, and always having a smile not only makes you a person easier to be around, but will get you a pursuit of happiness."

NMCC President Timothy Crowley conferred 223 associate degrees and 67 certificates to members of the graduating class. In his remarks prior to presenting the awards, Crowley encouraged the students to become engaged citizens.

"These are challenging time for many people in this Country. How you approach your future determines to a great extend your success. I wish you the best and encourage you to see your cup as half full. Be confident in knowing that you have the ability to make a difference and expect great things," said Crowley. "You community, your state and your country needs you to be engaged. Participate in our democracy; it is your right and your responsibility."

In addition to the graduates, Crowley also honored a member of the NMCC campus community with the President's Award. The honor is presented annually during commencement exercises.

Crowley presented the award to Ronald Fitzgerald, who most recently has served as NMCC's interim academic dean. The respected faculty member and administrator, who has served Northern Maine Community College for the better part of three decades, was appointed to the top academic post on campus last year by Crowley.

"With his outstanding dedication to NMCC and its students for nearly three decades, Ron has been a cornerstone for this College from its technical institute days through its evolution to a community college. Leadership, compassion and high standards are hallmarks of Ron's work," said Crowley.

Fitzgerald, of Presque Isle, first joined NMCC as a general education and math/science instructor in 1981. In addition to his 29 years in the classroom, Fitzgerald is an experienced administrator, having served as department chair for the arts and sciences (formerly general education) department since 1988, as trade/tech area coordinator for four years, and as acting dean for adult and industrial education for a year. He is the first individual to be honored with the President's Award on two occasions.

#####



Matthew Melcher (left) of Bingham, Maine, one of the 14 students who is among the first wind power technology graduates from a post-secondary institution in New England, is congratulated by Wayne Kilcollins (right,) Northern Maine Community College wind power technology instructor after NMCC commencement exercises at The Forum in Presque Isle on Saturday.



Northern Maine Community College students are congratulated by faculty and staff of the College as the exit commencement exercises at The Forum in Presque Isle on Saturday, May 14.