Saddleback College’s Class of 2009 Recognized in Commencement Ceremony

Mission Viejo, CA – Saddleback College recognized its 1,037 graduates and 827 certificate of achievement recipients on Friday, May 22nd at its annual commencement ceremony. The event, which was held in the college’s gymnasium, featured the traditional processional and reading of graduates’ names, along with Commencement Speaker Robert V. “Bobby” McDonald, President and Executive Director of the Orange County Black Chamber of Commerce and Member of the California Community College Board of Governors.

Also featured were Commencement Student Speakers Anoushah Rasta and Travis Fuller, graduates who are transferring this fall to USC and UCLA, and scholarship recipients of the President’s Award and Outstanding Student of the Year Award, respectively.

President Tod A. Burnett, Ed.D., offered welcome remarks and introduced the platform party, and South Orange County Community College District Board of Trustees President Donald P. Wagner and Chancellor Raghu P. Mathur offered congratulatory remarks.

During his welcome remarks, Dr. Burnett stated to the graduates, “You have demonstrated an enormous amount of persistence, determination, and effort to be here today, and for that you should be incredibly proud. On behalf of our faculty, staff, and administrators, I thank you for letting us be an integral part of your journey, a journey that will now take you as far as you want to go toward your educational, professional, and personal aspirations.”

Referring to Saddleback College’s motto, “Your Path to the Top,” during his speech, Mr. McDonald stated, “The information you picked up from Saddleback will allow you to grow, enhance and improve your life, and those in our communities as you continue on your path to the top. Thanks for exploring your talents and pursuing your dreams at Saddleback College — and in our Community College System.”
Members of the platform party included Board of Trustees Vice President John S. Williams, Clerk Thomas A. Fuentes, and members William O. Jay, David B. Lang, Marcia Milchiker, and Nancy M. Padberg, Vice President for Instruction Rajen Vurdien, Ph.D., Vice President for Student Services Lise Telson, Academic Senate President Bob Cosgrove, Ph.D., and Associated Student Government President Kalin Kelly.

During the ceremony, special recognition was given to Math Instructor Larry Perez, Saddleback College’s Professor of the Year and Orange County’s Community College Professor of the Year, who was introduced by Trustees Nancy Padberg and William Jay. Also recognized was Anatomy Instructor Tracey Magrann, Saddleback College’s Associate Professor of the Year, who was introduced by Trustees David Lang and Marcia Milchiker.

President Burnett gave special recognition to the graduates who are also veterans, who received a moving standing ovation from all in attendance.

Students participating in commencement are candidates for Associate in Arts and Science degrees and occupational certificates of achievement. Over 1,500 students will also be transferring to four-year colleges and universities to continue studying for their baccalaureate degrees. This year’s graduates will be transferring to four-year institutions such as USC, UCLA, UC Berkeley, UC Irvine, San Diego State University, CSU Fullerton, and Arizona State University, among others.

Of the 1,037 students who graduated from Saddleback College this year, 240 received honors, including 16 summa cum laude (4.0 grade point average), 84 magna cum laude (3.75 to 3.99 grade point average) and 140 cum laude (3.5 to 3.74 grade point average). Showing the diverse range of ages at the college, the youngest graduate, Nilab Hoqoq, is 18 years of age, and the oldest student, Fatemeh Shamsavi, is 69 years old.

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