

Transcript of SPCS Night: May 5, 2021

Videos are described below, but not captioned. A captioned recording of the entire celebration will be made available to attendees following the event.

[Opening Video]: Montage of award photography.

[Introductory Video]: Introduction by Dr. Ronald Crutcher, President.

Phil Melita, Emcee: We welcome the Dean of the School of Professional and Continuing Studies, Dr. Jamelle S. Wilson.

[Music and applause play]

Dean Wilson: Good evening and welcome to our first ever Virtual SPCS Night! While current conditions do not allow us to be gathered in the same physical space, we are indeed thrilled to share this special night of excitement with you and your families as we shine our spotlight on you!

Before we get too far along, I wanted to share some housekeeping rules for tonight's program. We're recording this event and will be sharing a link to the recording in the next week or so for you to share and for those who were not able to attend. Since we won't be able to hear or see you this evening, we're encouraging you to use the chat function to offer congratulations and celebrate this year's graduates, and I recommend opening your chat window now to make it easy for you to follow the conversation and offer shout outs.

This week marks the end of this part of your academic journey, and we are incredibly honored that you chose the School of Professional and Continuing Studies as the vehicle to get you to this point. SPCS Night, a tradition in our school that has spanned decades, is a night to celebrate your accomplishments and all of the individuals who have been with you along the way. I am proud to honor each of you tonight as the powerful tradition of SPCS Night continues.

We are grateful to President Crutcher for offering remarks to us this evening and to other administrators and faculty from across campus who have joined us this evening. Their support of the SPCS mission and of our students is a testament to their belief in the value continuing education programs bring to the communities we serve. Thank you for your support of the SPCS.

Countless individuals associated directly with the SPCS have supported, and in many cases guided, you on your passage to this point. I know they believe it is a privilege to support the academic mission of the SPCS and to invest in your success. It is indeed my pleasure to recognize and thank them for their efforts on your behalf:

First, our faculty — both full-time and adjunct faculty members have shaped your learning experiences and have walked alongside you on this journey, and I am sure you want to honor them with your virtual applause.

Our SPCS leadership team, which provides vision and crucial support for each of the programs in the SPCS.

Our SPCS staff work diligently to ensure that the experience we provide our students outside the classroom is as rich and as meaningful as that which occurs inside the classroom. Specifically, I'd like to extend thanks to James Campbell and the Marketing and Engagement team for attending to the numerous production details for tonight's virtual format. Finally, I'd like to offer my sincere appreciation to Kay Robertson for orchestrating the drive-by awards pick-up event on Monday evening and the special displays we'll all see throughout this evening's program. Kay's gift is celebrating others and making them feel extra special – Thank you, Kay.

There are three volunteer groups who offer their time on behalf of our academic programs. Each has continued its unwavering commitment over the past year, even the face of uncertainty: The SPCS Student Government Association has continued to organize virtual events on behalf of the students and represent the interests of our students to me and to the University. We also are supported by the SPCS Alumni Association and the SPCS Dean's Ambassadors Circle. These organizations are composed of our most ardent supporters and serve as the School's chief ambassadors in the community.

As I conclude my list of acknowledgements for this evening and before we move to recognitions, I want to salute each of our students tonight. Each of you likely has encountered a unique challenge or two as you've been on this educational journey with us. You may have wondered a few times along the way how in the world you would get it all done. To keep going in the midst of challenge requires tremendous support - from family, professional colleagues and your classmates – and it requires fortitude. So, at this moment, I invite you to take a deep, intentional breath and then exhale! You've accomplished so much and tonight; we applaud and celebrate your achievements – Congratulations!

As a member of the class of 2021, you will join over 4,800 alumni who have graduated from this School since 1963. That is a powerful number; the size of our alumni population has more than doubled in the last decade. As SPCS alumni, you have the responsibility to make your presence felt—on this campus and in our community.

To that end, I have two specific requests of you as you transition from students to alumni. Universities and schools within a university are known for many things, but none is more important than the accomplishments of their graduates. I hope you will resolve to use the knowledge and relationships you have nurtured here to maintain lives of meaning and purpose with a focus on enriching our community. This is our first expectation of each of you.

Secondly, it is my hope that you understand how important your engagement as SPCS alumni is to our work here on campus and in the broader Richmond community. We need you to remain engaged, to be our most passionate advocates. Each of you has achieved much through commitment and personal sacrifice; for that, you should be unapologetically proud. As you embody that pride, we hope you will acknowledge the opportunities that have been extended to you along the way by so many, both seen and unseen, who believe in you.

What does your engagement look like? It looks like membership and enthusiastic participation in the SPCS Alumni Association and its activities. Engagement looks like volunteering your time at an SPCS or University event when conditions allow. Engagement comes through referring your friends and colleagues to the SPCS for their professional and continuing education needs. Engagement also looks like giving to the SPCS Annual Fund. We are proud to devote the majority of our annual fund dollars to assist students in need or to provide opportunities that students wouldn't otherwise have.

I invite each of you to engage with us and commit to support our efforts at whatever level you are comfortable. Each time you support the SPCS you “pay it forward,” and that provides opportunities for the next generation of students.

Those are our two requests of you — shine the light of SPCS by enriching your community and stay engaged! We welcome you as lifelong members of the Spider community, and we look forward to hearing how your lives unfold.

And now it's your time! We're going to recognize this year's graduates by program. As I read the name of each program (Information Systems, Liberal Arts, Nonprofit Studies, etc.), it will appear on the screen and be followed by your names.

Even though we cannot physically see you, this is YOUR time. So when your degree is announced, applaud yourself and your fellow graduates for what you have achieved! Okay graduates, let's get this started!

Will all those receiving a degree or certificate in **Education**, including Graduate Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Curriculum and Instruction, Master of Teaching, or Teacher Licensure Preparation give yourself a cheer?

[Slide with applause audio]: Shows all Education graduating student names

Congratulations to this year's **Human Resource Management** graduates!

[Slide with applause audio]: Shows all HR Management graduating student names

Great job **Information Systems**, including IT Management and Information Security graduates!

[Slide with applause audio]: Shows all Information Systems graduating student names

Liberal Arts and Public History graduates, give yourself a hand!

[Slide with applause audio]: Shows all Liberal Arts graduating student names

Well done **Nonprofit Studies** graduates!

[Slide with applause audio]: Shows all Nonprofit Studies graduating student names

You did it **Paralegal Studies** grads!

[Slide with applause audio]: Shows all Paralegal Studies graduating student names

Congratulations best wishes to the entire SPCS Class of 2021!

Our Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Tom Shields, now has the privilege of announcing some of our top students involved with the Commencement ceremony on Saturday.

Dr. Shields: I wish we could all be together to acknowledge the achievements of all our students, but for this year, we are doing the next best thing by celebrating virtually. This is a special night, and it delights me to be able to showcase the graduating students who have achieved high academic excellence. Each year in the SPCS, it is a tradition to select students from among those who earned the highest grade-point averages to assist in the commencement ceremony by carrying the mace, flags, and SPCS banner.

I am pleased to announce that the recipient of the Richard W. Leatherman, Sr., and Ida May Leatherman *Mace Bearer Award* is **KENNY BUCHHOLZ**.

Before coming to UR, **Kenny** studied at the University of Calgary and Vancouver Island University. He moved to Richmond in 2003, and has been taking classes at the SPCS since 2016. He is grateful for his education and for the dedication of his wife, Shani Figgins Buchholz.

The flags and banner are symbolic of our identity to and respect for our nation, the University, and SPCS.

Presenting the United States flag will be **APRIL BITTNER**.

April is a graduate of our Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program, and serves as an Instructional Specialist with Virtual Virginia. As a specialist, she collaborates with school divisions across the state, provides professional development, and supports students in the virtual learning environment.

The University of Richmond flag will be presented by **ANNE CHAPMAN**.

Anne's casting journey began over 30 years ago on *Child's Play* and *Uncle Buck*. She is Virginia-based and specializes in independent and small-scale film and television projects. She teaches casting at VCU, and was a 2018-19 University of Cambridge visiting scholar.

Carrying the SPCS Banner is **JEREMY TOZIER**.

Jeremy acknowledges that the SPCS has assisted him in fulfilling a dream. He is at a splendid place in his career, and he dedicates his success to his amazing wife and family. He also commends the faculty of the Information Systems Program for helping him to focus his goals.

Congratulations to all of you for your excellent academic achievement!

There is one additional student who is being recognized tonight for his academic achievements. **COOPER SVED** has been selected as this year's student commencement speaker, representing all of you.

Before coming here, **Cooper** graduated from VCU with his Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and was active in Richmond's theatre community, both as an actor and an educator. He looks forward to beginning his teaching career in Northern Virginia in the fall.

Dean Wilson: Established in 1996 by the School and its Student Government Association, the Jean H. Proffitt Student Service Award is presented to a graduating senior recognized by his/her peers for outstanding service to the SPCS community. The award is given in honor of the service exemplified by long-time University College and SCS staff member Jean H. Proffitt, SPCS Class of 1983. Sadly, Jean passed away in March of 2020, but her spirit lives on within the SPCS.

This year's recipient is **MATTHEW RITCHIE**.

Emcee: Matthew served 28 years (both active and reserve) in the Virginia Army National Guard in a variety of assignments (including 10 years in HR), retiring in 2018 to join the federal civil service. He volunteers for Richmond SHRM, the UR Student SHRM chapter, and he lives with his family in Chesterfield.

Dean Wilson: Every year, we recognize graduates from each program for their academic achievements, and this honor takes the form of a book award. Academic book awards recognize scholarly excellence, and the recipients are honored with a plaque and a book personally selected by the program chair. It is now my pleasure to present to you the recipients of the SPCS book awards for 2021.

Our Graduate Education Program has several awards. Let's begin with our Teacher Education programs.

[Congratulatory Video]: Dr. Laura Kuti, Teacher Education Assistant Chair

Dean Wilson: Our first book award is the Samuel E. Perry, Jr. and Nancy B. Perry Book Award in recognition of Excellence in the Teacher Licensure Program and Master of Teaching Programs, grades K-6. Thanks to Dr. Laura Kuti for her leadership of this program. We are delighted to announce that **COOPER SVED** is the recipient.

Emcee: **Cooper** will be graduating from the University of Richmond this year with a Master of Teaching degree, with endorsements in Elementary Education and Theatre Education. He has enjoyed the interaction with his colleagues while in the classroom, and is proud to have a degree from the University of Richmond.

Dean Wilson: We now congratulate **MARIELLE JONES**, recipient of the Ann C. Taylor Book Award in recognition of Excellence in the Teacher Licensure and Master of Teaching Programs, grades 7-12

Emcee: **Marielle** is a Richmond native who received her undergraduate degree in Global Studies from the University of Richmond. This year, she is graduating with a Masters in Teaching with a concentration in Secondary Education and hopes to teach high school social studies. In her free time, she likes to listen to music, watch movies, and hang out with her French bulldog Hamilton.

Dean Wilson: We are pleased to announce that the recipient of the James W. Lanham Book Award for Excellence in Curriculum and Instruction is **CASEY PARKER**.

Emcee: **Casey** was selected to teach kindergarten during the STEP Residency program through the University of Richmond. She currently teaches 5th grade in York County Public Schools at Grafton Bethel Elementary. Her class includes a gifted cohort of students. She plans to pursue a second master's degree through National University.

[Congratulatory Video]: Dr. Kate Cassada, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies Assistant Chair

Dean Wilson: On behalf of Dr. Cassada and the entire Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program, I'm excited to announce that **FELICIA A. ARTIS** is the recipient of the Catherine S. Fisher Book Award for Excellence in Educational Leadership.

Emcee: **Felicia** entered college with the intent to study Computer Science and secure a job with the FBI or NSA. Teaching was not on her mind. After graduation, with two degrees and one-year-old twins, she needed a job and applied for a math teaching position in Richmond Public Schools. Thriving as a teacher, Felicia is about to begin her 20th year as an educator. She feels that as a leader she will be able to touch even more lives and build more minds.

[Congratulatory Video]: Dr. Tracy Nicholson, HR Management Chair

Dean Wilson: **ASHLEY SNIDER** is the recipient of the Steve Neal Book Award in Recognition of Outstanding Undergraduate Achievement in Human Resource Management.

Emcee: **Ashley** currently works for Henrico County and is a first-generation college graduate who considers her time at the University of Richmond one of the most invaluable experiences in her life. She is the SHRM Student Chapter President and SPCS SGA Vice President. She is thankful of the support from her husband, family, and friends while continuing her education.

Dean Wilson: **JEREMY GRANT** is the recipient of the Steve Neal Book Award in Recognition of Outstanding Graduate Achievement in Human Resource Management. Thanks to Dr. Tracy Nicholson for her leadership of our HRM programs and for joining us tonight for her first SPCS Night.

Emcee: Originally from Washington State, **Jeremy** is a 2012 graduate of Washington State University. He is currently an active-duty Force Management officer, and will receive his Masters in HRM on Saturday. After graduation, he will be leaving Richmond to work at the US Army Artificial Intelligence Task Force at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

[Congratulatory Video]: Dr. Lionel Mew, Information Systems Chair

Dean Wilson: On behalf of our Information Systems Program and Dr. Mew, we are delighted to announce that **JOHN CRABTREE** is the recipient of the George E. Christopher and George W. Swartz Memorial Book Award in the recognition of Excellence in the Information Systems Program.

Emcee: **John** Crabtree is currently an Assistant Vice President with the Federal Reserve - National IT Services. He holds a BA in Computer Science, an MBA from University of Richmond, and recently completed the Information Technology Certificate through SPCS. He spends his spare time on home renovations and is an avid runner who has completed several ultra-marathons including 50- and 100-mile distances.

Dean Wilson: The next award is the McDonald Davis, Jr. Book Award in Information Technology Management. The recipient of this book award is **LISA ORLOSKY**.

Emcee: **Lisa** serves the citizens of Henrico County, Virginia, as IT Manager of the Enterprise Applications and Development Team, a position she earned while pursuing her BSPS in IT Management. She is a 23-year County employee with nearly three decades of information technology experience. In her spare time, Lisa serves in ministry, teaches music and vocal lessons, and mentors students on her daughter's robotics team.

[Congratulatory Video]: Dr. Erik Nielson, Liberal Arts Assistant Chair

Dean Wilson: Our next award is for the undergraduate program in liberal arts, and it is the Kuehl Book Award in Recognition of Excellence in the Bachelor of Liberal Arts Program, which is under the leadership of Dr. Dan Roberts. This year's recipient is **ADRIENNE STEWART**.

Emcee: **Adrienne** is a graduate of the BALA Program with a concentration in Elementary Education. She is honored to have been surrounded by SPCS personnel whose encouragement and experience heightened her academic journey. In her spare time, Adrienne enjoys traveling with her husband and two daughters. She is currently a first-grade teacher with Henrico County Public Schools.

Dean Wilson: Our next award is the Daniel McDonald Roberts and Frances Taylor Roberts Memorial Book Award for the Master of Liberal Arts Program, under the direction of Dr. Erik Nielson. We are pleased to announce that the recipient is **ANNE CHAPMAN**.

Emcee: **Anne** started the MLA program in 2019 during her time as a Visiting Scholar at the University of Cambridge. Anne's family is her greatest joy, and she has had the fun challenge of being in virtual graduate school at the same time and in the same house as her son who is pursuing his MFA in Editing from Chapman University

[Congratulatory Video]: Dr. Andrew Schoeneman, Nonprofit Studies Chair

Dean Wilson: We have two awardees for the Louis J. Narduzzi Memorial Book Award in Nonprofit Studies, under the direction of Dr. Andrew Schoeneman. Our first recipient is **DREW BLAKELY**.

Emcee: **Drew** plans to combine his undergrad experience from UVA with his nonprofit expertise from UR to make an impact in the faith-based sector and church community. He has worked for Athletes in Action since 2019, and he has a passion to provide collegiate student-athletes with a chance to encounter their faith. And for Drew, a very special event will be occurring this July... he and his fiancé will be getting married, and they will be moving to Wilmington, North Carolina.

Dean Wilson: The second recipient of the Louis J. Narduzzi Memorial Book Award in Nonprofit Studies is **BLAKE STACK**.

Emcee: **Blake** has been working on his Master's Degree in Nonprofit Studies for the past three years, and he graciously acknowledges the support of his family, SPCS faculty and staff, and his UR classmates for his success. He has a hunger and passion for life-long learning, and he looks forward to collectively working with colleagues and neighbors to reverse the inequities in the community.

[Congratulatory Video]: Prof. Ann Hodges, Paralegal Studies Chair

Dean Wilson: On behalf of Ann Hodges, I'd happy to say that this year's recipient of the The William R. Marshall, Jr. Memorial Book Award in recognition of Excellence in the Paralegal Studies Program is **RACHEL YOUNG**.

Emcee: **Rachel** comes from a family of eight, and she spends much of her free time outdoors or reading books. She has worked at Chick-fil-a in various leadership roles for the past five years, and recently started working at a law firm in Richmond. Her long-time goal is to attend Law School.

Dean Wilson: Congratulations to all of you for your superior achievement.

[Congratulatory Video]: Dr. Jeff Legro, University of Richmond Provost

Dean Wilson: We'd like to now take a few minutes to recognize a few additional students and graduates for their achievements inside the classroom and out.

The next award is given in recognition of outstanding service to the University and is in memory of Taylor Kie (KEY) Cousins, a long time dedicated SPCS adjunct faculty member and community servant. It gives me great pleasure to announce that the recipient of the Taylor Kie Cousins Memorial Book Award is **ASHLEY SNIDER**.

Emcee: **Ashley** currently works for Henrico County and started her educational journey again thanks to the encouragement from her ever-supportive supervisors. She is a first-generation college graduate. Ashley lives in Midlothian with her husband, Brian, and their three cats, Little Bit, Loki, and Luigi.

Dean Wilson: Our next award is the Colonel (USA, Ret.) Porcher L. Taylor, Jr., Ph.D. Book Award for Leadership and Service to the Community. We are delighted to announce that **MICA MORGAN** is the recipient.

Emcee: **Mica**, a native of Virginia Beach, has 20 years of experience in the non-profit sector, with the last six years focusing on domestic and sexual violence work at the YWCA Richmond. Through her experience of

working with inner city youth as a Youth Director, Mica learned how being an active listener, utilizing patience and keeping her word could make all the difference in the world.

Dean Wilson: I now want to acknowledge the Elizabeth Spindler Scott Book Scholarship Award, which is awarded to an upcoming senior with the highest GPA. This year's recipient is **DAN THIGPEN**, who is receiving \$200 to purchase books of his choice.

Emcee: **Dan** moved to Richmond from his native Atlanta twelve years ago. He has worked as a cook in the Heilman Dining Center at UR for the last four years and has been an SPCS student for the last three. He and his wife, Laura, are approaching their five-year wedding anniversary and live with their cat, Dinah, in the near West End.

Dean Wilson: We are pleased to announce that we have three awardees for the Joanita Bbaale Senoga Book Award in Recognition of Academic Excellence by a Student Whose Native Language is not English.

Congratulations to **VÉRONIQUE ZARA** (Education).

Emcee: **Véronique** has taught French to people of all ages in a variety of settings. She worked in higher education for a number of years, teaching at the Pennsylvania State University, Wabash College, and the University of Richmond. She is currently teaching at the Heartwood Grove School, a language immersion school in Richmond, where she is finishing her student teaching.

Dean Wilson: Our next recipient is **SHARIF DELSOUZE** (Nonprofit Studies)

Emcee: **Sharif** is from Kabul, Afghanistan, and she has wonderful memories of her studies in the Masters of Nonprofit Studies program. While she completed her higher education abroad, UR gave her a unique opportunity to enhance and enlighten her perspective. Despite the stress, the expenses, the separation, she acknowledges that being here has been an experience of a lifetime.

Dean Wilson: Our final recipient of this award is **ANI GYURIJYAN** (HR Management).

Emcee: **Ani** was born in Armenia, and came to live in the United States in 2013. Before enrolling in the University of Richmond in 2018, she studied at the Armenian State University of Economics. She is proud to complete her Bachelor's Degree of Science in Professional Studies with concentration in Human Resource Management. Her son and husband are sources of inspiration, and they motivate her to accomplish her dreams.

[Congratulatory Video]: Tom Shields, Associate Dean & Chair, Education

Dean Wilson: We now want to acknowledge the following individuals for passing Capstone Assignments or Comprehensive Exams with Distinction.

Emcee: Passed with Distinction the Capstone Assignment for the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Graduate Program, we honor **Danielle Brown, Jason Collins, Allyson Goyette, Tracy Graves, Madeline Hargis, Destiny Reaves** and **Melissa Thurston**.

Dean Wilson: We now want to recognize the publication of student research. Early this year, several students had a research article published with Adjunct Associate Professor of Education **Erik Laursen**. Congratulations to **Rachel Bringewatt, Meredith Pram** and **Ebonee Henry**, who collaborated to author and publish an article

in the *Journal of Education and Social Policy*, which reports on research into the relational competence of first through third grade teachers.

Rachel and Meredith are 2020 graduates of the M.Ed. program in Curriculum and Instruction. Ebonee earned a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts degree with a concentration in Elementary Education from SPCS in 2019 and is currently an M.Ed. student in Curriculum and Instruction.

Dean Wilson: Those are our last student awards. Most of the individuals whose generosity made these awards happen continue to support our students, and we are genuinely appreciative of their continuing generosity.

This Saturday will be one of the most highly anticipated days of your life, whether you're able to join us in person or virtually through our live stream. It will be a remarkable day, and we have several speakers who will reinforce the significance of the event. You have already seen on the screen **COOPER SVED**, your Student Speaker. Joining him will be two more individuals — our distinguished alumnus and distinguished adjunct faculty member.

I am now pleased to announce that **MARGARET DALTON** is this year's recipient of the Gibb Family Distinguished Alumni Award, given by Andrew Gibb, UC class of 1983 in recognition of a loyal alumnus. Margaret is a graduate of the SPCS Class of 2012. I've had the pleasure of working with her in the various leadership roles she's held on the SPCS Alumni Association, including the 2019 president, and look forward to her words of encouragement for our students on Saturday, as she was once in your shoes.

As I noted earlier, we are fortunate to have an incredibly talented and dedicated group of faculty members. Our full-time faculty and nearly 175 adjunct faculty members bring incredible experience and passion to the classroom, and now, over five generations of adult learners have benefited from their expertise. Our students and our alums routinely tell me that the quality of instruction in SPCS is amazing. It's particularly interesting to me that so many alums have memories about individual instructors who had an extraordinary impact on them as professionals and as people. So I cannot thank the faculty enough for their loyalty to the School and particularly for their commitment to our students.

Our final recognition this evening is for the Itzkowitz Family Distinguished Adjunct Faculty Award, endowed by Fred Itzkowitz UC '75 and GB '76, to recognize outstanding teaching by an adjunct faculty member. This award has been presented since 1977, with nominations solicited from current students and selection made by the SPCS full-time faculty.

For this year, effusive remarks were submitted by students about their learning experience.

I am pleased to announce that the 2021 winner of this award is **DR. DREW BAKER**, from our Graduate Education Department. I'm proud to say that Drew is one of our own, having graduated from the Teacher Licensure Program in 2008. When not teaching at the University, Drew serves Henrico County Schools in the office of Professional Development, focusing his work on teacher-leadership development, action research, and supporting continuing education for teachers.

Dean Wilson: I love to read, and one of the things I treasure is a book whose chapters beckon you to read the next chapter and the next and the next. Some of my favorite books are those that when I get to the end, I'm left wanting more. I believe that each of our lives is a book made up of a compilation of chapters, each representing a specific time and season — one well-written chapter leading successively and with anticipation to the next.

Saturday's Commencement will mark the end of this chapter of your life's story, and I know as you look back on this chapter of your life, you will read there pure satisfaction and pride in what you have accomplished and a

sense of anticipation for doing more. It is my sincere hope that as a result of your time at the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, you have new tools and new experiences upon which you can draw to make the next step of your journey, your next chapter, as rich and meaningful as it can be. We share in your joy and look forward to seeing the next chapter you will write and the difference you will make.

Congratulations and good night!

[Closing Video]: Loop of mortarboard caps being tossed in the air.