



Hollins Celebrates the Class of '08 at 166th Commencement

Philanthropist, civic leader and higher education advocate Jane Parke Batten urged graduates to “aim high and make Hollins proud” during the university’s 166th Commencement Exercises on May 18.

Batten, a member of the Class of 1958 and this year’s guest speaker, reminded the 176 bachelor’s degree and 69 master’s degree candidates of Woody Allen’s famous line, “Life is what happens while you’re making other plans,” and offered “a list of things to do as life happens.”

She encouraged them to seek elected office (“run for something, even if it’s a seat on your school board or town council, and use those leadership skills you’ve learned at Hollins”); balance the growing impact of technology in their lives with creativity (“write a short story, paint a picture, compose music”), travel to an area of the world that is completely alien in terms of language, laws and customs (“never assume our ways are the best ways”); try to experience the natural world in its purest form (“be awed by its beauty and complexity”); and challenge oneself physically, whether its running a marathon or climbing a rock face (“from time to time scare yourself to death”).

Following her address, Clark Hooper Baruch ‘68, chair of Hollins’ Board of Trustees, awarded Batten the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws for upholding “the tradition of leadership among Hollins women and...embracing society’s challenges and addressing its needs with intelligence, purposefulness and grace.”

Prior to the conferring of degrees, Hollins President Nancy Gray proclaimed several new alumnae gifts to Hollins, including:

- A graduate fellowship in creative writing established by an anonymous donor in honor of Professor of English Richard Dillard.
- The Farrar Fund for Faculty Development, created by Lynn Farrar '78, who describes it as a way "to give something back to the faculty who are such an inherent part of the Hollins experience, far beyond the classroom."
- A fund endowed in part by Kelly Moul Morrison '03 in honor of University Provost L. Wayne Markert, which will provide stipends for faculty research, collaborations with students, travel to attend or present at conferences, new course development, and other endeavors. Markert is stepping down as provost this summer to focus on teaching, and in gratitude for his service and leadership, President Gray announced that he has been named University Professor, a title he will carry for the next three years.

Also highlighting this year's Commencement Exercises was the inaugural presentation of the Hollins University Teaching Award, made possible by Mary Bernhardt Wolfe Decker '58 and her husband, James DeWitt Decker. The award recognizes secondary school educators who have devoted their lives to preparing students to achieve and excel in a higher education setting, and Hollins seniors are invited to nominate the teachers who inspired them or contributed significantly to their intellectual and personal growth. The first recipient of the award is Susan Vincent, an earth science and marine biology teacher at the Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem, New York. Vincent was nominated by Alicia Crosby '08 and received a \$2,000 cash prize.

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