



Peabody College

COMMENCEMENT AWARDS CEREMONY

May 9, 2024

WYATT CENTER ROTUNDA

Undergraduate Student Awards Ceremony

UNDERGRADUATES

Welcome and Opening Remarks

DEAN CAMILLA BENBOW

Founder's Medal for First Honors

PRESENTED BY DEAN BENBOW

Cornelius Vanderbilt's gifts to the university included an endowment for this award, given since 1877, for first honors in each graduating class.

RECIPIENT: Morgan Anne Heath-Powers (Reno, NV)

Morgan is graduating with a BS in Human & Organizational Development. In addition to being both a Cornelius Vanderbilt and Peabody Honors Scholar, Morgan has received numerous honors and been involved in service and community outreach activities including leadership roles in Vanderbilt Pre-Nursing Society, volunteer Spanish medical interpreter at Siloam Health Clinic, critical Care medical volunteer at the Nashville Rock N' Roll Marathon, and tutoring with Next Steps.

The Banner Bearer

PRESENTED BY DEAN BENBOW

Each college's banner, with a field in the appropriate academic color, is decorated with the Vanderbilt logo and is used during Vanderbilt's Commencement ceremony. In recognition of Peabody's extended history, a Peabody Centennial Medal in a round walnut frame is mounted above the banner.

RECIPIENT: Qandeel Suleman (Euless, TX)

Qandeel is graduating with a BS in Secondary Education and History and will begin her career as a social studies teacher in Los Angeles. She developed her teaching skills through summer internships at Breakthrough Collaborative and student teaching in MNPS. On campus, she founded Future Educators of Color, fostering professional and personal connections for students of color in education. Additionally, she was involved in the South Asian Cultural Exchange, advocating for identity and community building through the House system in the organization and informative graphics.

The Peabody Alumni Award

PRESENTED BY DAVID CHAMBLISS

Awarded by the Peabody Alumni Association to a member of the graduating class who has demonstrated outstanding qualities of scholarship and leadership.

RECIPIENT: Steven Omari Rivers (Kennesaw, GA)

Omari is graduating with a BS in Human & Organizational development and Communication of Science & Technology. He has contributed to the Vanderbilt community through his leadership roles in the Delta Sigma Pi Business Fraternity and as a tour guide and VUceptor. Omari will be joining Boston Consulting Group in Austin, TX this fall.

The Dean's Integrity Award

PRESENTED BY ANITA WAGER

This award recognizes a student who stands out in their demonstration of integrity.

RECIPIENT: Rahul Bharat Vashi (Irving, TX)

Rahul is graduating with a BS in Human & Organization Development. Rahul's experiences at Vanderbilt included studying abroad in Madrid, participating in sports, and contributing to the TVA Investment Group. He has also been active with the Sigma Chapter of the Sigma Nu fraternity. Upon graduating, he will start his career in consulting in Washington, D.C.

The Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award

PRESENTED BY SHARON SHIELDS

This award recognizes a student who has demonstrated noble character and acted as a humble servant, placing service to others before self-interest.

RECIPIENT: Bemnet Alemayehu Argaw (Antioch, TN)

Bemnet is graduating with a dual major in Child Development and Medicine, Health, and Society. She will be attending Vanderbilt's School of Nursing in the fall to become a Family Nurse Practitioner.. Bemnet is actively involved in community-based participatory research. Through her work with the CHILL Lab, she spearheaded the development of the Youth Empowerment Program to empower the youth within her local Ethiopian Orthodox Church community in Nashville. Bemnet is President of the Ethiopian-Eritrean Student Association on campus and contributes as an Ignite Fellow with Teach for America.

The Peabody Faculty Council: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Award

PRESENTED BY HASINA MOHYUDDIN AND NICOLE JOSEPH

Established in 2016 to recognize a Peabody undergraduate, professional, and graduate student or student organization that has demonstrated leadership in improving the culture of Peabody through efforts in the area(s) of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

RECIPIENT: Gayatri Aluri (Mathews, NC)

As a Peabody Honors scholar, Gayatri Aluri worked on a variety of events and workshops with multiple student and community organizations to bring awareness and change on social justice issues such as reproductive justice and health equity, menstrual poverty, anti-caste discrimination, gender acceptance in culture, and the cultural preservation of art.

RECIPIENT: Future Educators of Color

Future Educators of Color aspires to create a community for students of color interested in a career in education. The organization strives to create a space where future educators of color can come learn and grow as individuals, while incorporating parts of their identity into who they are as teachers.

HUMAN AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

HOD Capstone Impact Award

PRESENTED BY KRISTEN TOMPKINS

Established in 2011 to recognize the Human and Organizational Development senior whose overall capstone performance and final project had the most significant impact within their host internship organization, as determined by their peers in the annual HOD Capstone Impact nomination and supervisor feedback.

RECIPIENT: Olutobi Temitope Akisanya (Gadsden, AL)

Tobi is a 2024 HOD with ILD track graduate. During her capstone she collaborated with the Wond'ry to further the hospital gown redesign initiative. Her project, entitled Designed for Dignity, was devoted to reworking hospital gowns to increase the comfortability of patients as a means of empowerment.

Best Honors Thesis in HOD

PRESENTED BY DOUG PERKINS

Best Honors Thesis in HOD is awarded by vote of the HOD Honors Committee.

RECIPIENT: Adam Daniel Anspach (Springboro, OH)

Adam is double major in HOD and Child Development. After graduation, he will be working as the manager of education at Room In The Inn. In this role, Adam will assist people experiencing homelessness and lead a program to provide the skills needed to both obtain and maintain housing.

Highest Honors in Human and Organizational Development

PRESENTED BY DOUG PERKINS

Selected by the HOD Honors Committee for highest honors based on the strength of the honors thesis, generally judged to be of publishable quality.

Katelyn Elizabeth Aksyonov (Elkhorn, NE)

Adam Daniel Anspach (Springboro, OH)

Leigh Anabel Farah (Honolulu, HI)

Jamie E. Klinenberg (Calabasas, CA)

Honors in Human and Organizational Development

PRESENTED BY DOUG PERKINS

Honors in HOD is conferred upon outstanding and highly motivated GPA-qualified students admitted to the Honors Program who complete and present an approved empirical honors thesis based on intensive original research supervised by a faculty member over two semesters.

Cambri Lain Driskell (Alpharetta, GA)

Lauren Elizabeth Elson (Los Angeles, CA)

Mia G. Kamen (Newtown, MA)

Mary-Margaret Rose McGowan (Mckinney, TX)

Alexander Williams Renkis (Nashville, TN)

Ryan Paul Rossow (Manhattan Beach, CA)

Ananya Sagar (Katy, TX)

Juntong Yu (Shenzhen, China)

Outstanding Student Awards

PRESENTED BY LEIGH GILCHRIST

Established in 1999 and presented to the graduating seniors who exemplify the highest levels of scholarship and leadership in the Human and Organizational Development program.

Outstanding Community Leadership and Development Graduate

RECIPIENT: **Adam Daniel Anspach (Springboro, OH)**

Through the CLD track, Adam focused his studies on the complex challenges facing communities. Specifically, he explored barriers to homelessness and healthcare through his Capstone at Room In The Inn and thesis on Medicaid enrollment. After graduation, he will work at Room In The Inn as manager of education.

Outstanding Education Policy Graduate

RECIPIENT: **Jamie E. Klinenberg (Los Angeles, CA)**

After graduation, Jamie will be working as a Research Assistant in the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (the CALDER Center), housed in the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C. Jamie's experiences at Peabody have cemented her passion for learning about various issues in education policy, and I hope to use what I've learned to contribute to making our public education system more equitable for all students.

Outstanding Health and Human Services Graduate

RECIPIENT: **Mira Kasturi Christina LaRocca (Concord, MA)**

Mira graduates with majors in Human and Organizational Development and Medicine, Health, and Society. She will continue her HHS work post-graduation at Kashable, a NYC start-up that works to improve employees' financial well-being through equitable lending. Here she will pursue her interest in how financial wellness impacts health outcomes.

Outstanding International Leadership and Development Graduate

RECIPIENT: **Elsie Rose Jacobsen (Englewood, CO)**

With a near-perfect GPA, Elsie has been on the Dean's List for Academic Excellence every semester of her Vanderbilt career. She has also committed countless hours to civic service, including her work in environmental preservation. She is one of the finest academic citizens our ILD program has ever known.

Outstanding Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness Graduate

RECIPIENT: **Christopher Ford Cowan (Columbus, OH)**

Ford embraced the applied nature of the Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness track to build a community of creative representation on campus. His many collaborative projects included short films, music videos, and social media content creation. After graduation, Ford will continue his passion of creating opportunity for creatives in the talent management industry with CAA in Los Angeles.

PSYCHOLOGY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

Psychology and Human Development Undergraduate Honors Award

PRESENTED BY LEIGH SCHEER

Established in 1997 and awarded to the graduating senior who has successfully completed the undergraduate Honors Program in cognitive studies, child studies, or child development and who has produced the best overall honors project.

RECIPIENT: **Yumeng Shen (Shanghai, China)**

Monica's academic and research caliber is well beyond her years. She has proven to be an excellent scientist in the classroom and research lab and has helped create a culture of critical thinking and sound practices. Monica is headed to UCSD to attend the Cognitive Science department.

Excellence in Child Development Award

PRESENTED BY LEIGH SCHEER

Established in 1997 and awarded to the graduating senior majoring in child development whose work, in the opinion of the faculty of the Department of Psychology and Human Development, exemplifies academic excellence.

RECIPIENT: **Sophie Mueller (Milwaukee, WI)**

Sophie is an exemplary student in every aspect with an incredible enthusiasm for learning. She has earned the highest praise from professors, mentors and supervisors in the classroom and in research labs. Sophie will be continuing at Vanderbilt next year in our Quantitative Masters program before continuing with her PhD.

Excellence in Child Studies Award

PRESENTED BY LEIGH SCHEER

Established in 2007 and awarded to the graduating senior majoring in child studies whose work, in the opinion of the faculty of the Department of Psychology and Human Development, exemplifies academic excellence.

RECIPIENT: Grace M Phillips (Cleveland, OH)

Through the Peabody Scholars Honors program, Grace worked teaching formerly incarcerated individuals and completed an internship in the Cleveland Hearing and Speech School. On campus she has also worked with Next Steps and the Susan Gray Center. Next year Grace will begin her Masters in Speech and Hearing at Vanderbilt.

Excellence in Cognitive Studies Award

PRESENTED BY LEIGH SCHEER

Presented annually by the Department of Psychology and Human Development to the graduating senior who most clearly exemplifies the goals of the Cognitive Studies program.

RECIPIENT: Casey Carrow (Morrisville, NC)

Casey has excelled in both the classroom and research as she has been an integral part in the Stress and Early Adversity Lab along with developing her own novel study. She has accepted the Sara S. Sparrow Fellow in Clinical Neuroscience of Autism at the Yale Child Study Center.

SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

Distinguished Teacher of Excellence in Special Education Awards

PRESENTED BY ANDREA CAPIZZI AND ALEXANDRA DA FONTE

Established in 1999 and presented annually to the graduating senior who exemplifies outstanding teaching in special education in their area. The recipient of each award exemplifies a student who has demonstrated knowledge and skills through field-based experiences and, more specifically, during student teaching. These students have demonstrated knowledge and skills in assessment, planning, data collection, instruction, collaboration, and professionalism.

High Incidence Disabilities Track

RECIPIENT: **Kahlo Marion Quinn (Santa Ana, CA)**

Kahlo is the very best of what every teacher educator hopes for in their students. Her exceptional knowledge and skills, engaging individualized teaching, and positive learning environments make learning meaningful and fun. Kahlo's dedication and heartwarming personality will undoubtedly significantly impact the lives of her students and colleagues.

Severe Disabilities Track

RECIPIENT: **Emily Grace Gillett (Walnut Creek, CA)**

Emily thinks through every lesson critically and creatively. She is consistently dynamic and differentiates content to meet individual needs while making connections to culture. Her contagious positive energy brings so much light in the classroom. Emily will no doubt serve her future students with kindness, creativity, and commitment to excellence.

Distinguished Service in Special Education Award

PRESENTED BY ALEXANDRA DA FONTE

This award presented annually to the graduating senior who exemplifies the highest commitment to professional service in special education. The recipient of this award exemplifies a student who has gone beyond the expectations with their commitment to support, guide, or advocate in the field.

Severe Disabilities Track

RECIPIENT: **Katherine Anne Russell (Fort Wayne, IN)**

During her time at Vanderbilt, Katie worked long hours in PALS Outreach, to keep the operation afloat to ensure parents and teachers obtained the materials needed to support students. She is a fast learner making her incredibly productive, while keeping a positive demeanor. She is an exceptionally competent and hardworking individual dedicated to service.

TEACHING AND LEARNING DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

Dorothy J. Skeel Award for Outstanding Professional Promise in Elementary Education

PRESENTED BY MOLLY COLLINS

Presented annually to a graduating senior who shows exceptional promise as a teacher at the elementary school level.

RECIPIENT: Avery Phillips (Dallas, TX)

Avery is majoring in Early Childhood Education and Spanish with a minor in Teaching Linguistically Diverse Learners. Avery has taught preschoolers in Metropolitana, Chile, and is a dancer and student leader in Vanderbilt's Momentum Dance Company. She's looking forward to teaching in Texas this fall.

Kevin Longinotti Award for Secondary Education

PRESENTED BY HEATHER JOHNSON

Named in 1999 by the Department of Teaching and Learning to honor the memory of Kevin Edward Longinotti, an outstanding secondary education major (mathematics, 1998). Presented annually to a graduating senior who shows exceptional promise as a teacher at the secondary-school level.

RECIPIENT: Marissa Tessier (Fort Lauderdale, FL)

Marissa has shown exceptional promise in her teaching in her middle school placement. According to both her mentor teacher and her university mentor, she has shown great creativity in her lesson design, used strong supports for English Language Learners, and provided consistent feedback to her students. Her UM said that Marissa had a large number of ELL students, asked for additional ideas on how to support those students and then took those ideas, and made them her own.

Undergraduate Award for Research in the Practice of Teaching and Learning

PRESENTED BY HEATHER JOHNSON

Presented to the graduating seniors who have, in or out of the classroom, integrated research and practice in the field of teaching and learning.

RECIPIENT: **Katherine Finnegan (Lake Forest, IL)**

Katie participated in a research study on the use of generative AI in the ELA classrooms in fall of 2023. In spring of 2024, she designed and presented a professional development for the teachers at Hume Fogg on using AI in the classroom. She received multiple accolades. She also designed multiple lessons for her action research project for her high school students on using AI in research tasks.

Undergraduate Award for Service in Out of School Settings

PRESENTED BY MOLLY COLLINS

Given to the undergraduate who has demonstrated exceptional practice in diverse, out of school settings.

RECIPIENT: **Ashley Nephew (Duluth, GA)**

Ashley is majoring in Elementary Education and Child Development. She has taught preschoolers in a STEAM-focused summer program, tutored MNPS students in language and literacy, and analyzed social justice math books on a summer research project. She plans to teach near her hometown this fall.

DEAN'S OFFICE AWARDS

Compass Leadership Award

PRESENTED BY ELIZA BLADES

Presented to an undergraduate student who has provided exemplary leadership, vision, and coordination for a Peabody student organization.

RECIPIENT: **Yunah Priscilla Song (Arlington, TX)**

With a heart for child development and a passion for community partnership and collaboration, Yunah co-founded Heart Strings, a student organization dedicated to joining service and creativity through various forms of fiber arts. Heart Strings aims to both allow Vanderbilt students to explore new avenues

of creativity and de-stress, while also donating these items to local children's hospitals and hospice care services. In Spring of 2024, Yunah led and facilitated a community fundraising event for bereaved families and the services that support them.

Peabody Student Marshals for Commencement 2024

PRESENTED BY ANITA WAGER

The undergraduate deans and directors of undergraduate students select as marshals students who have distinguished themselves by service to their school.

Stamatia Maria Angelides
(Staten Island, NY)

Adam Daniel Anspach
(Waynesville, OH)

Nicole June Arsenaault
(Virginia Beach, VA)

Trent David Bohan
(Yarrow Point, WA)

Casey Marie Carrow
(Morrisville, NC)

Anna Chang
(Kent, WA)

Emily Shaine Char
(Woodcliff Lake, NJ)

Christopher Ford Cowan
(Columbus, OH)

Jonah M Crist
(Marysville, OH)

Lauren Elizabeth Elson
(Los Angeles, CA)

Jahnai Rachel Garner
(Richmond, TX)

Emily Grace Gillett
(Walnut Creek, CA)

Elsie Rose Jacobsen
(Englewood, CO)

Jamie E. Klinenberg
(Calabasas, CA)

Mira Kasturi Christina LaRocca
(Concord, MA)

Rachel Hayoon Lee
(Brookline, MA)

Wenlu Liu
(Dalian, China)

Lucy Claire de Lande Long
(New York, NY)

Dalanyo Cynthia Mensah
(Athens, OH)

Vivien Rose Nguyen
(Grand Prairie, TX)

Chidi Ndubuisi Oluavu
(Beltsville, MD)

Grace M Phillips
(Cleveland, OH)

Kahlo Marion Quinn
(Santa Ana, CA)

Steven Omari Rivers
(Kennesaw, GA)

Samuel Leonardo Stubbs
(Arlington Heights, IL)

Iris Tseng
(Plainsboro, NJ)

Veronica Rae Wrobleski
(Fort Wayne, IN)

Peabody Scholars

PRESENTED BY MEG SAYLOR

The Peabody Scholars Honors Program was established in 2000 to offer particularly promising undergraduates at Peabody College opportunities for flourishing through intellectual adventure, community service, and research. Emphasizing personal, professional, and civic creativity, the program is designed to foster blooming of students' potential by offering both breadth by exposing students to a variety of academic and social experiences in different domains, and depth by engaging in service-learning and independent research.

Gayatri Rama Aluri
(Matthews, NC)

Marie Ann Caiola
(Chapel Hill, NC)

Alec Yan Cheng
(Carlsbad, CA)

Olivia Jane Friedland
(New York, NY)

Claire Annsley Gatlin
(College Station, TX)

Charlotte Grace Lange
(Clarksville, TN)

Mira Kasturi Christina LaRocca
(Concord, MA)

Lucy de Lande Long
(New York, NY)

Kai Ohno Mehra
(Atlanta, GA)

Gabriella Ann Modugno
(Trumbull, CT)

Georgia Marie Parris
(Washington, GA)

Grace M Phillips
(Cleveland, OH)

Morgan Anne Heath-Powers
(Reno, NV)

Krish U Shah
(Hawthorn Woods, IL)

Yunah Priscilla Song
(Arlington, TX)

Macy Sun Su
(Frisco, TX)

Yisu Yang
(Nanjing, China)

Dean's Award for Outstanding Scholarship

PRESENTED BY ANITA WAGER

Awarded to each summa cum laude graduate.

Closing Remarks

DEAN CAMILLA BENBOW

Please join us in the Wyatt Center Lobby following the awards presentations for a light reception honoring all of our distinguished graduates.
