“Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the best-looking, most intelligent, and by far the sexiest class ever to graduate from the University of Hartford.” That was the last line of the Commencement address to nearly 1,100 undergraduates and their families, friends, and guests on May 19. British novelist Bernard Cornwell, author of 50 historical novels including the Sharpe novels, urged students to think for themselves in a humorous speech that included a constant stream of witty remarks and anecdotes. Cornwell received an honorary Doctor of Letters from the University and a standing ovation from the audience during the undergraduate ceremony.

While not verified as the “most” intelligent graduating class, the Class of 2013 was certainly intelligent. More than 40 percent of the undergraduates in the class graduated with honors: 129 cum laude, 172 magna cum laude, and 138 summa cum laude. Additionally, a record 37 students graduated with University Honors, which means they completed 18 credits of honors courses as well as a senior-year thesis or research project.

This was the second year the University held a full Commencement Weekend, with the graduate ceremony on Saturday and the undergraduate ceremony on Sunday.

The speaker for the more than 400 students who received master’s and doctoral degrees on Saturday was Christopher M. Dadlez, president and CEO of Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford, Conn., who told them to “be courageous.” Since joining Saint Francis in 2004, Dadlez has worked to eliminate healthcare disparities in underserved communities. He received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters during Saturday’s ceremony.

Saturday’s graduates included the first graduating class of the Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics program. The 11 graduates will continue their training in individual residency programs in Connecticut and across the country. Top: More than 1,500 graduates received degrees on Commencement Weekend 2013. Nearly 100 wore legacy medals to denote that they have grandparents, parents, siblings, cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts, or uncles who also attended the University. Above left: Hospital administrator Christopher Dadlez told graduates receiving advanced degrees that every time they do a courageous thing, they become a better person—and the world becomes a better place. Above center: Members of the 50th anniversary graduating class (1963) honored as Golden Hawks were (l–r) Bob Carto, Bill Storey, Professor Emerita Virginia Hale, Jim Keane, and University regent Dave Schupp. Above right: British historical novelist Bernard Cornwell acknowledges a standing ovation for his humorous speech telling the undergraduate Class of 2013 that the most important skill they have learned at the University is to be critical thinkers. Opposite page, bottom: Graduating Hartt theatre students enjoy the ceremony.
Composer John Corigliano received an honorary Doctor of Music. His body of work includes more than 100 scores that have won him the Pulitzer Prize, the Grawemeyer Award, three Grammy Awards, and an Academy Award. He serves on the composition faculty at the Juilliard School of Music and holds the position of Distinguished Professor of Music at Lehman College, City University of New York.

Richard D. Fain received an honorary Doctor of Commercial Science. He oversees the development and growth of Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. for 25 years and, since 1988, has been chairman and CEO of the global cruise company that owns Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises, Pullmantur, Azamara Club Cruises, and others.

Walter Wick received an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts. The Hartford, Conn., native is an award-winning photographic illustrator and author. For two decades, millions of children have enjoyed the search-and-find series I Spy and Can You See What I See? that he created.

Miles Aron ’13 received the John G. Martin scholarship, which provides two years of study at the graduate level at Oxford University. Aron majored in acoustical engineering and music, had several challenging internships, and presented and submitted research on nonlinear partial differential equations with two University professors. He will study biomedical engineering at Oxford.

Peter Bowers ’13 received the John G. Lee Medal that recognizes academic achievement and a deep commitment to community service. He majored in mechanical engineering with a concentration in acoustics, had a part-time job and an internship, volunteered in the community, and maintained a 3.99 GPA. He will continue his education in the Harvard/MIT Program in Speech and Hearing Bioscience and Technology.

See full coverage of Commencement Weekend 2013, including photo galleries and video of the speeches, at hartford.edu/commencement.

The first names called most often during the University’s 2013 diploma ceremonies were Michael (24), Christopher (22), Andrew (16), and Matthew (16) for men and Jessica (24), Sarah/Sara (22), and Jennifer (18) for women. According to the Social Security Administration, Michael, Christopher, and Andrew were the three most popular names for boys born in 1992. Jessica was the second-most popular and Sarah the first-most popular name for girls born in 1992.