For a third year, the University of Hartford celebrated two Commencement ceremonies in one weekend. On Saturday, May 17, more than 425 graduate students received master’s and doctoral degrees at the Graduate Commencement, cheered on by family members and friends at the ceremony held under a large white tent. On Sunday, the tent was filled with attendees and graduates at the Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony. Guests filled the tent and spilled out into the rows of chairs outside as nearly 1,100 students received their bachelor’s degrees.

At the Graduate Commencement, President Walter Harrison gave the Commencement speech, telling graduates, “Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American poet, said to Walt Whitman, another great American poet, after he’d read his first book, Leaves of Grass, ‘I greet you at the beginning of a great career.’ And I feel today that I am greeting you at a great beginning.”

Also during the festive Graduate Commencement, the University presented honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees to Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund, and to world-renowned chef Jacques Pépin. Joe Torre, Major League Baseball’s (MLB) executive vice president for baseball operations, gave the Commencement address at the undergraduate ceremony on Sunday, May 18. Torre played for the Milwaukee/Atlanta Braves, St. Louis Cardinals, and New York Mets in his 18-year career as a player and also managed five MLB clubs, including 12 years with the New York Yankees. Torre will be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., on July 27, 2014.

In his speech Torre focused more on overcoming adversity than celebrating success. “Even though you go out there in your field of play and you do everything right and you give it every bit of energy and every bit of passion that you have, it may not work out. It may be a disappointment, but that’s when you check the character level and you bounce back.”

President Walter Harrison described Torre, who also received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, as “an outstanding and courageous individual” for his work as a baseball player, manager, and executive, and for his work against domestic abuse through the Joe Torre Safe At Home Foundation.

Other honorary degree recipients were Ellen Marram, former president and chief executive officer of the Tropicana Beverage Group, and Rabbi Stanley Kessler, the founding rabbi of Beth El Temple in West Hartford, Conn.

For more about Commencement 2014, including photos, videos, and text of Commencement speeches, go to hartford.edu/commencement.
Photos, Selfies, & Tweets

Joe Torre

Alexander Domini ’14

Jacques Pépin

Golden Hawks

Ellen Marram

Rabbi Stanley Kessler

Marian Wright Edelman
Three outstanding members of the Class of 2014 were recognized for their academic excellence during Undergraduate Commencement on May 18.

**Belle K. Ribicoff Prize**

Nicole Kalmus ’14 received the Belle K. Ribicoff Prize. A double major in international studies and modern language (French), Kalmus was one of eight University Honors students who presented at the highly selective National Conference of Undergraduate Research in Lexington, Ky., in April. Her presentation explored how foreign aid was distributed in Haiti after the devastating earthquake in 2010.

“Niki’s enthusiasm is infectious,” says Jane Horvath, associate professor of economics and director of the economics and political economy programs for the College of Arts and Sciences.

From the dance and Ultimate Frisbee teams to the Red Caps, Gospel Choir, and several other groups, it’s hard to find an organization in which Kalmus was not involved. Her ability to balance these extracurricular activities with the rigor of the University Honors program made her an ideal recipient of this impressive award.

**John G. Martin Scholarship**

Catherine Brennan ’14 will take her passion for mathematics across the pond to study at Oxford University in the fall as this year’s recipient of the prestigious John G. Martin Scholarship. She graduated with a 3.95 grade point average and majored in mathematics with a minor in actuarial science. She was also a private and group tutor for the University’s Student Success Center and in the math and physics tutoring lab.

Planning to stay in school indefinitely, as a student and then a professor, Brennan’s scholarly instincts are undeniable. She continues to seek the answers to the questions introduced by her Calculus II professor. It was in that course that Brennan recalls being handed a mathematical problem that focused on differential equations, Newton’s Law of Cooling, and how they could help determine the time of a murder.

“In the 15 minutes it took to solve the problem, the decision to pursue a degree in mathematics was made with 100 percent certainty,” Brennan says. “Most would not consider homicide to be of particular mathematical interest, but the problem prompted the realization that the applications of mathematics extended to the further reaches of contemporary life.”

**John G. Lee Medal**

Kyle Hebert ’14, a double major in economics and mathematics with a minor in actuarial science, received the John G. Lee Medal.

With an almost perfect 3.98 GPA, he received the Junior Regents’ Honor Award in the College of Arts and Sciences, given to the student with the highest GPA in his or her respective college, last spring.

“In my 30 years as faculty at two universities, I have rarely, if ever, come across a student as bright as Kyle,” said Farhad Rassekh, professor of economics and associate dean of the Barney School of Business.

Hebert gained valuable work experience in internships at two industry-leading insurance companies, Cigna and MassMutual Financial Group, and has already successfully passed two actuarial exams.

Outside the classroom, Hebert was active in the University of Hartford community. He was a member of the University Honors program and vice president of the Alpha Chi Honor Society. He cofounded the University’s Actuarial Club and served as its president.

He will pursue a master’s degree in applied statistics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison this fall.
Also honored at Commencement this year were a top executive at Cigna, a prolific composer for television and film, and the director of NBC’s *Meet the Press*.

### 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award

**Mark Boxer ’83**, who is global chief information officer for Cigna, received the University’s Distinguished Alumni Award during the Undergraduate Commencement ceremony.

At Cigna, Boxer is responsible for driving the company’s worldwide technology strategy and ensuring that its infrastructure and applications are innovative, flexible, and aligned with both the business strategy and the needs of customers, partners, and employees.

Prior to joining Cigna, Boxer was group president for government healthcare at Xerox Corporation. He also served as deputy global chief information officer for Xerox. Before that, he served in various leadership roles at WellPoint, Healthsource, and Hewlett Packard.

Boxer earned a bachelor’s in engineering and a bachelor’s in physics from the University of Hartford in 1983. He earned an MBA in finance from the University of Connecticut and a master’s in information systems from Drexel University. He also holds a doctorate in global public health from the Arizona School of Health Sciences.

A trustee of The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, Boxer also serves on a number of boards. He has been recognized as one of *Computerworld’s* Premier 100 IT Leaders and by *Insurance & Technology* magazine as an Elite Eight technologist. Boxer, who champions the employment of the disabled, has received both the Tony Coelho Award, named after the coauthor of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Justice for All Award, given by the American Association of People with Disabilities.

### 2014 Hartt Alumni Award

Composer **Ed Alton ’81**, has had an impressive career in the Los Angeles TV, film, and recording industries for nearly 30 years. To date, he has composed scores for more than 530 episodes of 31 different prime-time network TV series and performed as bassist on more than 70 feature-film soundtracks. He has received numerous honors, including five ASCAP Top TV Composer Awards, an Emmy nomination, and several Gold and Platinum Record awards.

Some of Alton’s more prominent TV compositions include the scores for the 1980s hit series *Head of the Class*, the Top 10-rated series *Suddenly Susan*, and *The Single Guy*, two of which ran during the peak of NBC’s successful Thursday-night “Must See TV” reign. Recent well-known series have included *My Boys* on TBS and *Whitney* on NBC. Alton plays many of the instruments used on his own soundtracks.

In 1998, Alton’s song, performed by Bernadette Peters on the CBS series *The Closer*, was recognized with an Emmy nomination for outstanding music and lyrics. In 1997, *Daily Variety* recognized Alton as one of TV’s top theme composers when it listed him as number 5 among Nielsen’s Top TV Themesters of the 1990s.

Alton also played bass on the soundtracks of such popular films as *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, *The Breakfast Club*, and *Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure*.

### 2014 Hillyer Distinguished Alumnus

**Rob Melick A’96,’98**, director of NBC’s award-winning Sunday morning news show, *Meet the Press*, was recognized as a Distinguished Alumnus of Hillyer College during Hillyer’s diploma presentation ceremony at Commencement this year.

Melick also earned a bachelor’s degree in communication at the College of Arts and Sciences. While at the University, he immersed himself in the Student Television Network, STN-2, and had internships at Hartford’s NBC affiliate and at the Fox Network in New York City.

Melick began as the director of news broadcasts in Rochester, N.Y.; Hartford, Conn.; and Philadelphia, Pa., as he built a reputation for talent, dedication, and a tireless work ethic. This and a network of mentors earned him a spot as director of the weekly political television show *Fox News Sunday*, based in Washington, D.C. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Melick produced shows on the road in 26 states and has directed everything from Oval Office interviews to broadcasts from Afghanistan.

Melick caught the attention of NBC and, in 2010, became the director of *Meet the Press*, the longest-running show on network television.