Nearly 150 graduates celebrated the completion of their degrees at the 15th annual Fall Commencement ceremony on Sunday, Dec. 4, 2011. Fall Commencement is held for undergraduate and graduate students who complete their degree requirements in September or January but cannot attend the University’s traditional Commencement ceremony in May. Among this year’s graduates was Elizabeth Horton Sheff, a well-known activist who filed the landmark Sheff v. O’Neill school desegregation lawsuit in Connecticut to address educational inequities. Sheff earned a Master of Education with a specialty in educational technology.

During the ceremony the University presented an honorary Doctor of Laws to Chase T. Rogers, chief justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court. Rogers said she was “truly humbled” by the recognition and congratulated all the graduates on their accomplishments. She also encouraged them to “seriously consider staying in the state of Connecticut with your newfound skills.”

Rogers is the second woman and the 35th person to hold the state’s highest judicial office, having been appointed by then-Gov. M. Jodi Rell in 2007. In 2010, President Barack Obama appointed Rogers to the board of directors of the State Justice Institute, which is charged with working to improve the quality of justice in America’s state courts.

University President Walter Harrison assured the graduates that he is optimistic about their futures. “I sincerely believe that you have prepared yourself for a fulfilling career and a lifetime of service to humanity.”

Two-Day Commencement in May

The University will begin a new tradition in May 2012, when Commencement will become a two-day event. The ceremony awarding graduate degrees will take place on Saturday, May 19, 2012, at 10:30 a.m. The ceremony awarding undergraduate degrees will be held on Sunday, May 20, 2012, at 10:30 a.m. Both ceremonies will take place on the Gengras lawn, where, for the first time, a tent large enough to cover the stage as well as faculty, student, and guest seats—approximately 3,000 in all—will be erected. The tent will provide shade from the sun and cover from inclement weather.

“This new, two-day Commencement format allows for consistency in scheduling the two main ceremonies regardless of weather and reduces the number of cars and people on campus each day,” said Provost Sharon L. Vasquez when she announced the change to the campus community.

For additional information about Commencement, visit hartford.edu/commencement.
For a few days in February, the stage in Millard Auditorium was transformed into the Double-T Ranch and the Hotel Casablanca in Texas. The New England premiere of Thomas Pasatieri’s comic opera, The Hotel Casablanca, brought the composer to campus for a week to conduct master classes and coach the cast prior to performances. The Hotel Casablanca is a comic tale of love, guns, and mistaken identity deep in the heart of 1940s Texas.

Patrons shared rounds of laughter during the four days of performances on campus, and Pasatieri shared a wealth of experience and knowledge with students and faculty. His notable career has straddled the worlds of opera and Hollywood for decades. Known as one of America’s most respected and performed vocal and opera composers, he is one of the movie industry’s most successful film orchestrators.

An accomplished, performing pianist by the age of 10, Pasatieri began his work as a composer at 15, studying with the renowned French teacher Nadia Boulanger. At age 16 he entered The Juilliard School in New York City, where he would become the school’s first recipient of a doctoral degree.

Pasatieri’s first staged opera was The Women, a one-act work based on an original story. It premiered when he was 20 at the 1965 Aspen Festival and won the composition contest for that year. In all, he has composed some 20 operas, including Signor Deluso (1974), The Trial of Mary Lincoln (1972), and his best-known work, The Seagull (1972).

In 1984, Pasatieri left the New York opera scene and moved to Los Angeles, Calif., to form a film music production company, Topaz Productions. During a question-and-answer session with Hartt faculty and students, he described arriving on the set of Pretty Woman (1990), expecting to find Madonna in the female lead. Instead, he saw a young actress he did not recognize by the name of Julia Roberts. “I didn’t think she was beautiful and I could hardly hear her lines. But when I looked into the camera, suddenly she was transformed. That’s when I learned that things aren’t always as they seem in that industry.” Other film orchestrations by Pasatieri include The Shawshank Redemption, Fried Green Tomatoes, Angels in America, Road to Perdition, and The Little Mermaid.

In 2007, Pasatieri returned to opera with the premieres of two new works, Frau Margot and The Hotel Casablanca. Hartt’s production of The Hotel Casablanca was double-cast, with undergraduate vocal students Matthew Cramer ’12 and Alex Hunt ’14 as Burton, Daniel Fortine ’13 and George Mason ’13 as Charles, Sydney Anderson ’12 and Maria Cook ’12 as Tallulah, Erica Jeski ’12 and Sara Lobdell ’12 as Lucy, Gregory Flower ’12 and Miguel Vasquez ’12 as Tom, Joseph Baker ’14 and Michael Spaziani ’12 as Raul, Marlon McWilliams ’13 and Dean Murphy ’14 as Tobias, Emily Dalesio ’13 and Dana Kephart ’12 as Bluebell Pooder, and Angela Joy Lamb ’12 and Erica Maas ’12 as Veronique. The production was conducted by Hartt vocal professor Doris Lang Kosloff and directed by opera stage director Ron Luchsinger.

Top: (l–r) George Mason ’13 (rear), Sydney Anderson ’12, Sara Lobdell ’12, Michael Spaziani ’12, and Miguel Vasquez ’12 in a scene from The Hotel Casablanca. Left: George Mason ’13 and Erica Maas ’12.
Beauty Is a Rare Thing

Exhibit of contemporary handmade books

The sampling of handmade books that was chosen for Rare Beauty: Contemporary Visions in Book Arts, an exhibit at the Joseloff Gallery in February, required the viewer to suspend expectations. These books were not the traditional narrative text, perhaps with photographs, between two covers.

The exhibition displayed the incredible scope of the craft of bookmaking when placed in the hands of artists. From traditional, recognizable book forms to interactive boxes, text-wrapped jawbones, embroidered scrolls, and installations, the books in this exhibition stretched all familiar boundaries of what defines a “book.”

Rare Beauty showcased the work of six distinguished printmakers and book artists. Steven Daiber, Pati Scobey, and Barb Tetenbaum are the 2011–12 Georgette and Richard Koopman Distinguished Chairs in the printmaking department at the University of Hartford’s Hartford Art School. Three invited artists—Julie Chen, Kathy Kuehn, and Wilber H. Schilling—also contributed work.

The title of the exhibition was inspired by Schilling, who said, “In this increasingly digital age, a carefully handmade, inspiringly designed, and richly tactile book is a rare beauty.”

Rare Beauty was organized by Lisa Gaumond, managing director of the Joseloff Gallery, with the help of the faculty of the Hartford Art School printmaking department: James Lee, associate professor of printmaking, and Jenni Freidman, visiting assistant professor, as well as John Willis, foundation department coordinator.
Founders Day 2012: Just Bead It!

The University of Hartford’s 55th Founders Day, Feb. 21, 2012, fell on the start of Mardi Gras this year, and planners for the celebration decided to adopt it as the event theme. The festivities began at noon, with New Orleans–style menus in both cafeterias, and ended with a paper airplane contest at halftime at the men’s basketball game against Stony Brook.

Counterclockwise from top right:
President Walter Harrison (left of banner) poses with the Grand Prize winner, the float from the music fraternity, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. Participants, who sang the University’s fight song, “Fly High, Hawks, Fly High,” will receive a pizza party for each of the next three months.

A battered Stony Brook Seawolf and kazoo band float from Hawk Hall’s Spirit Residential Learning Community won as the wackiest entry.

Both cafeterias served New Orleans–style food, including gumbo and jambalaya, and student volunteers from the Student Government Association and University staff handed out Mardi Gras beads. Here, students sing along with the pep band playing at lunchtime in Gengras Cafeteria.

Judges for the float contest were (l–r) Hartford Art School Professor Power Boothe, President Walter Harrison, and graduate communication student Caitlin Terry ’10, M’12.

Members of the pep band wear Founders Day “Just Bead It” T-shirts.

The Center for Community Service float won for Best Variety of Themes and Costumes.