Peirce College’s 2012 Commencement – Preparing Graduates to Meet the Needs of Today’s Job Market

PHILADELPHIA, PA – June 11, 2012 – On Monday, June 11, Peirce College, Philadelphia’s leading private, non-profit, four-year accredited institution for working adult learners, will hold its 147th Commencement. The event, which will be held in Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center, Philadelphia, begins at 6:45 PM.

“We’re delighted to have another class of Peirce students graduating,” said James J. Mergiotti, Peirce President and Chief Executive Officer. “We’re the college that really works for working adults, and we have some great graduates who have overcome major obstacles and challenges in their pursuit of a college degree.”

“Throughout our history and as one of Philadelphia’s oldest institutions of higher education, we have sought to achieve a supportive, nurturing environment for working adults, who often come back to school with unique needs, yet with the determination to succeed and overcome their obstacles and challenges,” Mergiotti said.

At the ceremony, Peirce will confer 389 degrees, 238 of which will be at the bachelor’s level. Remaining true to its mission of serving working adult students, the average age of this year’s graduating class is 36.7 years. Over 90% of the graduates reside in the Philadelphia region.

For the first time this year, Peirce will graduate 12 students from its new bachelor’s program in Accounting, established in 2010. With an increase in available accounting positions, the College created the bachelor’s degree program from its initial concentration to take advantage of this opportunity in the marketplace and to leverage Peirce’s historical expertise in this field of study.
Patricia A. Coulter, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Urban League of Philadelphia, will deliver the keynote address. Her career has included leadership positions in a variety of corporate and nonprofit organizations. She has also made her mark as a civic leader in the Philadelphia community, serving on various nonprofit boards and associations. Peirce graduate and business owner Nakia Michelle Stokes will introduce Ms. Coulter.

Atiya Goldsmith-Irby is the Student Commencement Speaker for this year’s ceremony. Like most Peirce students, she is a working adult, balancing life, family and business, as well as studies. Atiya is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration, with a concentration in Entrepreneurship/Small Business Management. She received Peirce’s Outstanding Student Award and the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) Student Leadership Award, and is president of Peirce’s Kappa Nu chapter of Delta Mu Delta, the International Honor Society in Business Administration. Originally from South Philadelphia, she now lives in Chester, Pa.

Asked why she selected Peirce College, Atiya said, “I attended a Peirce open house and liked the way I was treated by staff and faculty from the minute I entered the building.” Her husband, three children, sister and niece will be there to see her graduate.

Peirce graduation is often a family affair. This year, Ashley Jenkins and her husband, Vector Cole, are graduating together. Not long ago, Ashley’s husband, a real estate broker, was forced to close his office due to the recession. It was a struggle just to stay afloat with their bills and deal with the everyday stress of life, but they knew that with college degrees, they could be successful in careers that would help them support their family.

On June 11, Vector will receive his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, with a concentration in Management, and Ashley will receive her Associate in Science in Business Administration, with a concentration in Management. “We did it together,” she said proudly.

In the Class of 2012, there are 32 military graduates, such as Wesley Wayne Vesterby, a former member of the US Army. Wesley is a combat veteran of a number of conflicts, including the Gulf War, and served as a member of the UN intervention forces during the Bosnian War.
A single father, he is raising a teenage daughter and has a financial management position with The Windsor Suites in Philadelphia. There were many opportunities for him to walk away from his studies because of personal challenges, but he persevered instead. He is graduating Magna Cum Laude with a bachelor’s degree in Accounting and a GPA of 3.79. Wesley serves as a Peirce ambassador, and is a member of Delta Mu Delta and the Chi Alpha Epsilon National Honor Society. He is one of the first graduates of Peirce’s recently introduced Accounting program.

Gilberto Gonzalez, 30, a Marine, will receive his bachelor’s degree in Business Administration, with a concentration in Management. He is one of a growing number of Hispanic students at Peirce and is in the final stages of becoming a fire fighter. Gilbert, who lives in Newark, NJ, said he went back to school because he wanted to give himself and his daughter a better future.

“Coming from a single parent family, where my mother raised three children by herself, earning a bachelor’s degree means a lot to me in that I can show my mom that her sacrifice and devotion allowed me to achieve my degree,” Gilbert said. “As for Peirce, it was a great environment…I wouldn’t want to get my degree from anywhere else!”

Jason Simmons, 24, is graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration, with a concentration in Marketing, and has already secured a job with NASCAR. Attending Peirce has become a family tradition, as both of Jason’s parents are also Peirce grads. A resident of Northeast Philadelphia, he currently works for Reimbursement Technologies, Inc. in Conshohocken, Pa. Family members, including his parents, will attend the ceremony. “When I look out and see the face of my grandmother, it will be worth every night I stayed up until sunrise studying for tests and completing projects,” said Jason. “I know she will be very proud.”

Daria Ward is one of Peirce’s eldest grads—65 years young—and is an example of Peirce’s campaign for lifelong learning. A former case worker for public welfare, she is receiving a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration, with a concentration in Management. Although Daria, who lives in the Point Breeze neighborhood of Philadelphia, did not need to return to school, she had promised herself that she would one day complete her education, and wanted to
be an example for her children and grandchildren. Now she is graduating Cum Laude and is an ambassador for the College.

The Peirce College Class of 2012 is 69 percent female, and 55 percent of all graduates identify themselves as black or African American. Eighty two (82) percent are residents of Pennsylvania, and 10 percent are residents of New Jersey.

About Peirce College

Peirce College offers bachelor’s and associate degree programs in the areas of Business, Healthcare, Information Technology and Legal Studies. Located in the heart of Philadelphia, Peirce is a non-profit institution that specializes in serving the unique needs of working adults, many of whom work full time and are raising families. In response to the changing demands of the economy and the prospect for future jobs in the Philadelphia market, Peirce recently introduced additional degree programs in Healthcare, Human Resource Management, Accounting, and Criminal Justice. Peirce College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19104 (phone: 267-284-5000). The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs accredits the College's Business Administration program and the Paralegal Studies program is approved by the American Bar Association.

For more information about Peirce College, call 888.GO.PEIRCE, or visit www.peirce.edu.


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