# Billionaire Surprises UMass Dartmouth Graduates with $1,000 Gift Each for Philanthropic Act



**Billionaire Gifts UMass Dartmouth Graduates $1,000 Each with a Philanthropic Twist**

On May 20, 2024, during the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth commencement ceremony, billionaire philanthropist Rob Hale made a unique gesture. Attending an unexpected rainy event, Rob Hale surprised over 1,000 graduating students by announcing from the stage a gift of $1,000 each. However, Hale imposed one condition: recipients must keep $500 and give the other half away.

Hale, founder and CEO of Granite Telecommunications and estimated by Forbes to have a net worth of $5.4 billion, emphasized the joy he and his wife Karen have found in giving. He remarked, "These trying times have heightened the need for sharing, caring, and giving. Our community needs you, and your generosity, more than ever."

This gift marks the fourth consecutive year Hale has made similar donations to graduating classes, extending previous generosity to students at UMass Boston, Roxbury Community College, and Quincy College. UMass Dartmouth graduates who did not attend the ceremony missed this opportunity.

Hale also shared his own business challenges, including his previous company Network Plus filing for bankruptcy during the dotcom crash in 2002. Despite this, he shared humorous and reflective advice, showcasing resilience in his career journey.

**Boston College Commencement Highlights Global Issues and Local Achievements**

Boston College held its 148th commencement ceremony on May 20, 2024, at Alumni Stadium, with nearly 5,000 students receiving their degrees under cloudy skies. The event proceeded without disruptions, unlike other Boston-area universities that have faced protests relating to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

The main speaker, Cardinal Stephen Chow, Bishop of Hong Kong, addressed current global tensions and commended Boston College for continuing the live commencement. Chow, one of five individuals receiving honorary degrees, spoke on fostering dialogue and reconciliation amidst global and campus conflicts.

Boston College President William P. Leahy highlighted the commencement's role in addressing ongoing global issues, including conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Haiti, and Sudan. Among the honorary degree recipients were Dana Barros, Sister Maria Teresa De Loera Lopez, Dr. James O’Connell, and Mary Skipper.

For many graduating students, this ceremony marked a significant milestone, having begun their college journey amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The event concluded with traditional celebrations, marking a hopeful transition from academic life to the broader world.