# Billionaire Surprises Graduates with Cash Gifts while Pro-Palestinian Protests Disrupt Harvard Ceremony



**University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Graduates Receive Cash Gifts from Billionaire Philanthropist**

On May 23, 2024, billionaire philanthropist Rob Hale surprised 1,200 graduates at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth’s commencement ceremony. The event, marked by heavy rain, saw Hale distributing $1,000 to each graduate—$500 for themselves and $500 to donate to a cause of their choice. The gesture follows a pattern for Hale, known for sharing his wealth generously; in 2022, he and his wife Karen gave away $1 million weekly to various causes. Hale is the co-founder and CEO of Granite Telecommunications and part-owner of the Boston Celtics.

**Pro-Palestinian Protests Impact Harvard Graduation Ceremony**

Harvard University’s commencement ceremony on Thursday was held amidst tensions due to the Israel-Hamas conflict. Thirteen students involved in a pro-Palestinian protest were barred from receiving their degrees. This decision, made by the Harvard Corporation, has sparked controversy. The graduation ceremony, attended by many family members and friends, proceeded as planned despite ongoing demonstrations and previous conflicts involving the protesters and conservative groups.

These significant events at Massachusetts institutions capture different facets of philanthropy and activism, reflecting the intricate dynamics in academic communities.