



Macaulay Honors College
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For Immediate Release

31 Macaulay Honors College Seniors Named Valedictorians and Salutatorians at CUNY Senior Colleges

(June 1, 2015, New York, NY) – Five Macaulay Honors College seniors have earned valedictorian distinctions at their upcoming college commencements, and two of them will speak at graduation. **Abhinaya Swaminathan** '15 Macaulay Honors College at Baruch College and **Kawsar Ibrahim** '15 Macaulay Honors College at the College of Staten Island, will each speak at their commencement ceremonies. Twenty-six other Macaulay students have earned salutatorian honors.

“These impressive distinctions for our students to be named CUNY valedictorian or salutatorian underscores the rigor, dedication and achievement that they bring to all their endeavors from academic research to community service,” said Ann Kirschner, Dean at Macaulay Honors College. “We are thrilled for Macaulay students who receive these special honors as they exemplify our commitment to excellence.”

At Baruch College, Abhinaya Swaminathan, an economics and political philosophy major, is a member of Phi Eta Sigma National Honors Society. This year she won an Excellence in Economics award from the Economics department at Baruch. In 2014, Swaminathan won 3rd place in the Economics category of the 2014 CUNY Nobel Science Challenge. The Flushing, Queens resident will be attending Harvard Law School in the fall.

“I was completely surprised to be selected and it is an incredible honor,” said Swaminathan. “The entire student body at Baruch is incredibly motivated and that has inspired me to work harder and to be a better person.”

At CSI, Kawsar Ibrahim, a psychology major, who is graduating *summa cum laude*, has been on the Dean’s List each year since 2011 and received the 2015 CSI Auxiliary Service Corporation Award for Academic Excellence in Psychology. In 2011, she also received the Valedictorian/Salutatorian scholarship. The senior, whose parents moved to the United States from Egypt, is also a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. The Great Kills, Staten Island native next plans to attend the NY College of Podiatric Medicine.

“I was excited to go home and tell my parents so that they are assured that everything they gave up in their home country to come the United States to better their children's future was worth it,” said Ibrahim. “At least I can show them that part of my motivation to excel and make them proud is to give back just a fraction of what they have done for me.”

Three other Macaulay students, all from Hunter College, have earned the valedictorian distinction: **Simon Ayzman, Hunter Gross** and **Saveliy Kelebeyev**. Hunter selects its student commencement speaker in a separate process.

For the next highest distinction, 26 Macaulay Honors College seniors have earned salutatorian honors, and two of them will speak at their school's commencement ceremonies. They are **Da Wi Shin** (City College) and **Lucinda Zawadzki** (CSI).

Da Wi Shin, a Korean immigrant and biomedical engineering major, also plans to pursue a medical career. He has received the Biomedical Engineering Department Academic Excellence Award every year at CCNY since he was a freshman. The Douglaston, Queens, resident was also named a University Scholar (2015) and won the Zemansky Introductory Physics Prize (2012), among other honors.

CSI's salutatorian **Lucinda Zawadzki** will be graduating with a major in biology. Zawadzki also has been on the Dean's List each of her four years at CSI and is the winner of the CSI Foundation Scholarship Fund (2014) and the New York Community Trust Grant (2015). The Great Kills, Staten Island native eventually hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in her interest in bird ecology.

The other Macaulay salutatorians are all at Hunter College:

Daniel Afonin, Sharifa Baldeo, Chana Ben-Zacharia, Gregory Dreifus, Carol Dweck, Thomas Hart, Rita Kirzhner, Brian Lamberta, Erika Larsen, Taylor Latrowski, Alexander LeMell, Shanika Powell, Esther Rong, Joseph Salem, Graham Siegling, Jason Sloan, Shima Tafreshi, Kevin Tseng, Ashley Van Der Grinten, Vlad Velicu, Hannah Westerman, Shu Shu Wu, Alda Yuan and **Tina Zarbaliev**.

In addition, **Lauren Blachorsky**, a winner of Queens College's Paul Kapper Award, a top student honor, will deliver the Baccalaureate address.

About Macaulay Honors College

Macaulay Honors College at The City University of New York offers exceptional students a uniquely personalized education with access to the vast resources of

the nation's largest urban university and the largest city, New York City. Selected for their top high school records and leadership potential, Macaulay students receive a full tuition scholarship, a laptop and technology support, and an Opportunities Fund to pursue global learning, research and service opportunities. Macaulay students enroll in one of eight CUNY senior colleges: Baruch, Brooklyn, City, Hunter, John Jay, Lehman, and Queens Colleges and the College of Staten Island. For more information, see macaulay.cuny.edu.

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