

## May 2026 Commencement Recommended Honorary Degree Recipients

<b>Name</b>	<b>Honorary Degree</b>	<b>Ceremony</b>
<b>Toni Boucher*</b>	Doctor of Letters - Litt.D.	School of Business May 9, 2026
<b>Kevin Burns*</b>	Doctor of Humane Letters - L.H.D.	College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Sciences May 9, 2026
<b>Gerald Chan</b>	Doctor of Science - Sc.D.	UConn Health May 11, 2026
<b>Elisabeth DeLuca*</b>	Doctor of Humane Letters - L.H.D.	School of Nursing May 9, 2026
<b>Scot X. Esdaile</b>	Doctor of Laws - LL.D.	School of Social Work May 9, 2026
<b>Frank Fillipetti*</b>	Doctor of Fine Art - D.F.A.	School of Fine Arts May 9, 2026
<b>Anita McBride*</b>	Doctor of Humane Letters - L.H.D.	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences - CLAS 2 May 10, 2026
<b>Indra Nooyi*</b>	Doctor of Humane Letters - L.H.D.	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences - CLAS 1 May 10, 2026
<b>Matthew Olander*</b>	Doctor of Science - Sc.D.	School of Engineering May 9, 2026
<b>Barbara Smith*</b>	Doctor of Letters - Litt.D.	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences - CLAS 3 May 10, 2026
<b>Bryan Stevenson</b>	Doctor of Laws - LL.D.	UConn Law School May 17, 2026
<b>Stanley Wittingham</b>	Doctor of Science - Sc.D.	Doctoral Ceremony May 11, 2026

The Honorable Antonietta “Toni” Boucher, MBA ’02, is a distinguished public servant, business leader, and philanthropist whose career spans more than four decades in Connecticut and beyond. She currently serves as First Selectwoman of Wilton, Connecticut, and leads the Boucher Family Foundation. A former Connecticut State Senator representing the 26th District and a 12-year State Representative, she has played a significant role in shaping education, fiscal, and municipal policy. Her leadership includes service on the Wilton Board of Education, the Connecticut State Board of Education, and numerous civic and national nonprofit boards. In the private sector, she held senior leadership roles at Commonfund and was inducted into the UConn School of Business Hall of Fame in 2024.

Mrs. Boucher’s connection to UConn is deep and enduring. She has served on the UConn Foundation Board of Directors and its Finance Committee, supported the Center for Continuing Studies and the Nonprofit Leadership Institute, and, with her family, has established scholarships and endowed funds. She is nominated in recognition of her transformative public service, philanthropic leadership, and unwavering commitment to UConn and the state of Connecticut.

Kevin R. Burns is a distinguished executive whose career spans the food, health, and technology sectors. He currently serves as President and Chief Operating Officer of Chobani, America's leading yogurt brand, where he has twice been called upon to guide the company through pivotal periods of growth and transformation. Widely recognized for operational excellence and strategic leadership, Burns helped scale Chobani into a diversified, mission-driven food company producing dairy and plant-based products distributed to 95,000 retail locations worldwide. He previously served as CEO of Alto Pharmacy and JUUL Labs and held global operational leadership roles at TPG Capital, as well as senior positions at Solectron/Flextronics, Westinghouse, and McKinsey & Company. He has also served on multiple public company boards across industries.

A proud UConn alumnus and member of the College of Engineering's Academy of Distinguished Engineers, Burns has established scholarships. He is nominated in recognition of his transformative industry leadership, commitment to expanding access to nutritious food, and enduring dedication to advancing opportunity and innovation at UConn.

Gerald L. Chan is a scientist, entrepreneur, and global philanthropist whose career bridges biomedical research and transformative educational investment. Born in Hong Kong in 1951, he earned engineering degrees from the University of California, Los Angeles before completing advanced degrees in medical radiological physics and radiation biology at Harvard University. After postdoctoral research at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, he co-founded the Morningside Group in 1986, building a global investment platform focused on biotechnology and life sciences innovation. Through the Morningside Foundation, Dr. Chan has made historic gifts to advance public health, interdisciplinary design, and biomedical research, including transformative support for universities worldwide.

Dr. Chan's nomination to the University of Connecticut recognizes his leadership in uniting scientific rigor with philanthropic purpose. His investments in biotechnology have accelerated therapies and diagnostics with global health impact, while his philanthropy has expanded research capacity, scholarships, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Honoring Dr. Chan affirms UConn's commitment to global engagement, innovation, and ethical leadership in science and education.

Elisabeth C. DeLuca, née Adomat, is a distinguished philanthropist and 1969 graduate of the University of Connecticut School of Nursing whose life reflects an enduring commitment to healthcare, education, and public service. Born in East Prussia in 1947, she immigrated to Bridgeport, Connecticut, as a child and became the first in her family to pursue higher education. After earning her nursing degree, she served as a medical-surgical and intensive care nurse at Bridgeport Hospital, rising to head nurse of the ICU. Today, she is president of the Elisabeth C. DeLuca Foundation and remains active in the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation, directing transformative investments in health, conservation, and opportunity.

Her connection to UConn is both personal and historic. In 2023, she made a major gift to support a new School of Nursing building, expanded enrollment, and scholarships for students with financial need. She is nominated in recognition of her extraordinary philanthropy, steadfast dedication to nursing education, and profound impact on healthcare access and student opportunity in Connecticut and beyond.

Scot X. Esdaile is a lifelong New Haven resident and nationally respected civil rights leader whose career has advanced social justice, community empowerment, and systemic reform. As President of the Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches for more than 21 years—and previously President of the Greater New Haven NAACP—he became the youngest State Conference President in the nation at the time of his election. He also serves on the National Board of Directors of the NAACP and chairs its National Criminal Justice Committee. Under his leadership, Connecticut launched the NAACP One Million Jobs Campaign pilot, advanced the “Nothing About Us Without Us” criminal justice reform movement, and led national efforts challenging prison gerrymandering. He has championed landmark reforms including abolishing the death penalty in Connecticut, limiting Taser use, and establishing the Minority Health Advisory Council.

Mr. Esdaile maintains a strong partnership with the University of Connecticut and UConn Health, including collaboration with the Cato T. Laurencin Institute for Regenerative Engineering. He is nominated in recognition of his transformative leadership, enduring advocacy for equity, and sustained impact on public policy, health equity, and educational opportunity across Connecticut and the nation

Frank Filipetti is a seven-time Grammy Award–winning record producer, audio engineer, and mixer whose work has shaped the sound of popular music, film, and Broadway for nearly five decades. A Bristol, Connecticut native and 1971 graduate of the University of Connecticut (B.A. in Psychology), he began his career as a songwriter and session musician before becoming chief engineer at Right Track Studios, helping build it into New York’s largest dedicated recording facility. A pioneer in fully digital recording and surround-sound mixing, he has earned more than 500 album credits and worked with artists including Billy Joel, Barbra Streisand, and Elton John. His Grammy-winning Broadway recordings include *Wicked* and *The Book of Mormon*. A founding member of METAlliance, he is also dedicated to mentoring the next generation of audio professionals.

Filipetti is nominated in recognition of his groundbreaking contributions to music production, his commitment to education and innovation, and his embodiment of UConn’s creative and entrepreneurial spirit as a distinguished alumnus.

Anita B. McBride is a distinguished public servant and educator whose White House career spanned more than two decades and three presidential administrations. She served as Assistant to President George W. Bush and Chief of Staff to First Lady Laura Bush from 2005 to 2009, overseeing policy, communications, scheduling, and strategic initiatives focused on human rights, women's empowerment, global health, and education. Earlier, she directed White House Personnel under Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush and held senior roles at the U.S. Department of State, participating in U.S. delegations to the United Nations on issues including the Status of Women and HIV/AIDS. She later served on the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board and today is Executive in Residence at American University's School of Public Affairs.

A graduate of the University of Connecticut with a B.A. in International Studies, McBride previously received UConn's President's Award of Distinction. She is nominated in recognition of her exemplary public service, global leadership, and as an accomplished alumna whose career reflects the impact of a UConn education and offers meaningful opportunities for renewed engagement with the University.

Indra Nooyi is a global business leader best known for transforming corporate strategy through a commitment to sustainable and socially responsible growth. Born in Chennai, India, she earned her undergraduate degree from Madras Christian College, an MBA from the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, and a master's degree from the Yale School of Management. After early roles at Johnson & Johnson and the Boston Consulting Group, she joined PepsiCo in 1994 and rose to become Chairman and CEO in 2006. During her tenure, she launched the influential "Performance with Purpose" strategy, integrating profitability with nutrition, environmental sustainability, and community investment. Under her leadership, PepsiCo's revenues grew more than 80 percent while advancing global commitments to health and stewardship.

Her nomination to the University of Connecticut recognizes a career that exemplifies principled leadership, innovation, and service. Nooyi's emphasis on data-driven strategy grounded in values mirrors UConn's commitment to preparing ethical, globally minded leaders who advance business and society together.

Matthew Olander is a visionary engineering leader whose career at General Dynamics Electric Boat spans over 25 years, shaping the design, innovation, and strategic execution of the nation's most advanced submarines. Appointed Senior Vice President of Programs and Planning in 2025, he leads Electric Boat's Program Office, integrating cross-disciplinary expertise and advancing critical initiatives. Previously as Vice President for Design and Engineering, Olander oversaw more than 4,000 engineers and designers, directing Independent Research and Development (IRAD) and Concept Formulation (CONFORM) programs that drove breakthroughs in nuclear submarine technology and digital engineering. His leadership earned the General Dynamics Technology Excellence Award and advanced multiple platforms, including Virginia-class, Seawolf, SSN(X), and AUKUS programs.

A double UConn alumnus, Olander earned bachelor's degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Metallurgy and later completed a master's at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He was inducted into the UConn Academy of Distinguished Engineers in 2023 and serves on the College of Engineering Advisory Board and the National Institute for Undersea Vehicle Technology. He is nominated in recognition of his technical excellence, mentorship, and lasting contributions to UConn, engineering innovation, and national security.

Barbara Smith is a pioneering feminist, activist, author, publisher, and public intellectual whose work has shaped Black feminist thought for more than five decades. A former PhD student in English at the University of Connecticut (1981, ABD), Smith sharpened the theoretical and literary foundations that would inform her enduring scholarship and activism. In 1974, she co-founded the Combahee River Collective, and co-authored its landmark 1977 statement, now one of the most cited texts in feminist studies. She later co-founded Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, expanding opportunities for writers of color, including publishing groundbreaking works by Audre Lorde.

Smith's activism spans civil rights, anti-war, anti-apartheid, voting rights, and abolition movements. Elected to the Albany Common Council in 2005 and nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize that same year, she has received numerous honors, including a Lambda Literary Publishing Professional Award and the Harriet Tubman Lifetime Achievement Award. An honorary doctorate from UConn would recognize her profound intellectual contributions, deep ties to the university, and unparalleled impact on feminist studies, Black studies, and social justice movements worldwide.

Bryan Stevenson is the Aronson Family Professor of Criminal Justice and University Professor at New York University School of Law and the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama. For decades, Stevenson has led groundbreaking litigation challenging excessive sentencing, racial bias, and the wrongful conviction of death row prisoners. He has argued and won multiple cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, including a landmark 2012 decision banning mandatory life without parole for children. Under his leadership, EJI opened the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, transforming national understanding of slavery, lynching, and mass incarceration. He is the author of *Just Mercy*, adapted into a major motion picture, and the recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship, the National Humanities Medal, and numerous international honors.

Stevenson's ties to the University of Connecticut include receiving the 2019 Thomas J. Dodd Prize in International Justice and Human Rights and serving as the Connecticut Law Review's Day Pitney Visiting Scholar. His nomination recognizes a career that exemplifies UConn's highest ideals: using education, law, and moral courage to advance justice, dignity, and human rights worldwide.

M. Stanley Whittingham is a pioneering materials chemist whose discoveries launched the modern era of rechargeable energy storage. Born in Nottingham, England, he earned his B.A., M.A., and D.Phil. in chemistry from University of Oxford before completing postdoctoral research at Stanford University. In the 1970s, while at Exxon, Whittingham developed the first rechargeable lithium battery and introduced the concept of intercalation electrodes using titanium disulfide—an innovation that became foundational to lithium-ion battery technology. Since 1988, he has served at Binghamton University, where he directs the Institute for Materials Research and has led major Department of Energy initiatives in chemical energy storage. He has authored more than 400 publications, holds numerous patents, and was awarded the 2019 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. In 2024, he was knighted for services to chemical research.

His nomination to the University of Connecticut recognizes scientific work that underpins renewable energy integration and electrified transportation. Honoring Dr. Whittingham affirms UConn's commitment to research excellence, sustainability, and innovation that advances global public good.