# May 2020 Commencement
## Proposed Honorary Degree Recipients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Honorary Degree</th>
<th>Ceremony</th>
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<tr>
<td>Theresia Bauer</td>
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<td>Richard A. Robinson *</td>
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*denotes UConn alum*
**Minister Theresia Bauer (School of Education)**

The Baden-Wuerttemberg (Germany) (BW) and Connecticut Exchange Program was established by the Baden-Wuerttemberg Parliament and the Connecticut General Assembly in 1991. Formerly administered by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education, subsequently the Office of Higher Education, it has been administered by the University of Connecticut since 2015. For details of the program, please see: [https://bwgermany.uconn.edu/about-2/](https://bwgermany.uconn.edu/about-2/).

Overtime, although Connecticut has reduced and now eliminated any state support for this program, BW, under the leadership of Ms. Theresia Bauer, Minister of Science, Research, and the Arts, has consistently appropriated significant amount of funds to support Connecticut students who study in BW. Such funds (close to 100,000 euros annually) include free German language emersion courses, and a monthly stipend that covers housing expenses, and recently annual funds to support faculty mobility from both sides. It is important to note that the majority of the students and faculty members benefiting from this exchange program come from UConn. In December 2019, Minister Bauer awarded a grant of 150,000 euros to form a BW-CT Human Rights Consortium led by UConn faculty and University of Freiburg faculty.

Minister Bauer’s commitment has had a direct impact on the Connecticut 21st century workforce. The majority of the students who participate in the program are the Eurotech program students from UConn ([https://internationalengineering.uconn.edu/german/](https://internationalengineering.uconn.edu/german/)). The graduates of this program have a track record of securing high-skilled jobs in engineering firms across the state, notably Pratt-Whitney, Electric Boat, and many German firms located in Connecticut. In 2019, President Susan Herbst and Minister Bauer renewed the exchange agreement for another 10 years and has added the exchange in the area of teacher preparation.

Theresia Bauer has been the Minister of Science, Research and Arts for the State of Baden-Württemberg since May 12th, 2011. She is also a member of the State Parliament of BW.

Theresia Bauer was born on April 6th, 1965 in Zweibrücken, Germany. She holds a master’s degree (German: Magister) in political science, economics and German philology from the University of Heidelberg, where she studied from 1985 to 1993.

From 1993 until 2001, Theresia Bauer was first the political education spokesperson for the Society for Political Ecology, and was then subsequently named the director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Baden-Württemberg. She has been a member of the State Parliament of Baden-Württemberg since 2001. There she has served as the spokesperson for higher education policy, parliamentary secretary and deputy head of the parliamentary faction of the Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), and as a member of the committee for Science, Research and the Arts of the State Parliament until becoming Minister in 2011.

Theresia Bauer has visited UConn twice. In October 2014, she led a delegation of Baden-Wuerttemberg Research University Rectors to UConn. In March 2017, she travelled with a Baden-Wuerttemberg Parliament Delegation to UConn. Both visits resulted in specific program development and support for UConn faculty and students.
Catherine A. Leslie (School of Engineering)

Over the past several years, the UConn School of Engineering has embarked on a major initiative to educate and seamlessly instill human rights considerations into our curriculum. The goal of this is rooted in the idea that every decision and technology embarked on by an engineer has a ripple effect on society.

Catherine “Cathy” Leslie (P.E., F. ASCE, CAE), Executive Director of Engineers Without Borders USA since 2004, is the living embodiment of the values and mission of a career rooted in human rights, and has led an organization that has inspired engineering students to participate in countless humanitarian efforts. Engineers Without Borders is a non-profit humanitarian organization established to partner with developing communities worldwide in order to improve their quality of life. This partnership involves the implementation of sustainable engineering projects, while involving and training internationally responsible engineers and engineering students.

She has seen the growth of the organization from one university chapter to more than 275 student and professional chapters. The 16,800+ passionate, highly skilled volunteers that comprise these chapters work in more than 40 countries around the world. Her presence, and EWB’s presence extends beyond the borders of the United States and into communities in Central America, South America, Africa, and Asia. Over the last decade, Leslie has led an organization that has touched and bettered nearly 600,000 lives per year, through work in creating clean water sources, rebuilding infrastructure and jumpstarting new sources of agriculture and food.
Joni Mitchell (School of Fine Arts)

Over the course of her remarkable career as songwriter and performing artist, Joni Mitchell richly deserves the award of Honorary Doctoral Degree at the University of Connecticut for her contributions as an artist of the highest stature and national/international reputation; for the sustained high quality of her work over a period of more than 40 years; and for her superb musical gifts as composer, poet, singer, guitarist and pianist.

She ranks among the greatest songwriters of the last half of the 20th century – if not the greatest. Her songs have profound importance for the history and development of American music in their ability to reach across class, race, and time. Her lyrics plumb the depths of what it means to think and feel, to love, empathize, to be human with all our flaws, desires, triumphs and disappointments. Her body of work may be fairly described by the German Gesamtkunstwerk or total art work: by composing the poetry, music, singing, playing guitar, piano and dulcimer (including a radically innovative approach to the guitar through her deployment of different tunings), producing, and doing the art and paintings for each design of her nineteen original studio albums, she has created an artistic legacy that will continue to resonate with audiences, musicians and scholars for generations to come.

The artistic achievement of Ms. Mitchell both reflects and is enabled by her artistic integrity, courage, and moral, ethical, and intellectual standards. Like other iconic artists with long careers like Miles Davis and Pablo Piccasso, she has never been satisfied by producing an acclaimed work and finding ways to replicate it. The course of her career demonstrates time and again her re-invention of her music, lyrics and subject matter, ranging from acoustic folk in the 60’s, to 70’s combo jazz and fusion, to 80’s rock and electro-pop, and finally to a grand synthesis in her last four albums. Her songs have proven far ahead of their time in addressing environmental issues, social injustice, poverty and hunger, and prejudice. Her own growth as an artist is intertwined with her personal courage in dealing with polio as a child, being an unwed mother at age twenty, and making her way in a music business that was and remains today largely male-dominated.

As an artist of the highest stature, a person of absolute honesty and integrity, and a matchless chronicler of the human condition and psyche, Ms. Mitchell is an inspiration to our entire UConn nation. Her work reaches out university-wide in its intellectual, moral and ethical principles; to the School of Fine Arts in its integration of manifold artistic genres; and to the Department of Music in the virtuosity and craftsmanship of her compositions and performances. And – finally – there’s the gut-level emotional response of listeners to her music: like all composers we consider as “great,” her songs make our jaws drop, make us weep, fascinate, energize and elate us even after repeated hearings over many years.

Due to personal reasons, Ms. Mitchell is unable to receive her degree in person. In Ms. Mitchell’s absence, Dr. Daniel J. Levitin will accept the award on her behalf, and Dr. Levitin would participate as commencement speaker. He would be able to speak to Joni Mitchell’s remarkable achievement as musician, artist, and inspiration to succeeding generations; and, perhaps, speak personally as well to his own trajectory from LA musician, engineer, and producer to his stature as one of the foremost researchers in the world on the perception and cognition of music. Dr. Levitin holds a dual appointment in the Psychology Department and Medical School at McGill University.
Chief Justice Richard Robinson (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences)

Justice Robinson earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from UConn in 1979 as an English major prior to attending law school at the University of West Virginia. He returned to Connecticut to serve in the City of Stamford Law Department, rising to Assistant Corporation Counsel, then on to an appointment as Judge of the Superior Court, and ultimately to Chief Justice following a unanimous confirmation by the State Senate and State House of Representatives in 2018.

Justice Robinson’s career has stretched well beyond judicial service into community engagement and an astonishing breadth of public service. Activities include service as President of the NAACP in Stamford, CT, as General Counsel for the CT Conference of the NAACP, President of the Assistant Corporation Counsel’s Union, Commissioner of the CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, membership on the Judicial Education Curriculum Committee, among others. He has been awarded the CT Bar Association Young Lawyers Diversity Award, the Naruk Judiciary Award for Integrity, the Penn Award for Excellence in Leadership. And again, this is just the beginning of a long list of recognitions and honors.

Justice Robinson is a renowned and principled leader of the Judiciary of the State of Connecticut. By awarding him an honorary doctorate, we would both acknowledge his accomplishments in law and demonstrate the importance that we attach to his study in the humanities and to his mission of social justice. By recognizing the wide-reaching impact of his work, the College and the University can illustrate his role as a force that unites humanity across boundaries.
Sheila Dinotshe Tlou (School of Nursing)

Sheila Dinotshe Tlou is the Co-Chair of Nursing Now, a global campaign of the International Council of Nurses and the World Health Organization to raise the profile and status of nursing worldwide. After receiving the Ph.D. in Nursing from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1990, Tlou became Professor, Head of the University of Botswana School of Nursing, and Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre in Primary Health Care.

In 2004, she was Specially Elected as a Member of Parliament of the Republic of Botswana and was appointed a member of cabinet as the first health professional and nurse Minister of Health. During her four-year term, Tlou led a comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support program for HIV and AIDS. She rolled out antiretroviral and prevention-of-mother-to-child-transmission medications to near universal (90%) uptake. As a result of her efforts, transmission of HIV from mother to child decreased from 29% to 8%, and maternal mortality due to AIDS decreased from 30% to 10%. Based on these dramatic results, her program became the international standard for the treatment of HIV/AIDS among women. In addition to these policy endeavors, Tlou’s scholarly work focused on enabling women, particularly married women in a patriarchal society, to negotiate with their partners for safer sex and on reducing the stigma of AIDS and helping people living with HIV live positively.

In 2010, she joined UNAIDS as Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa. She provided leadership and political advocacy for quality sustainable AIDS response in 21 African countries, from Eritrea to South Africa, including the Indian Ocean Islands of Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Comoros. She was instrumental in the formation of advocacy bodies such as The Pan-African Positive Women’s Coalition (PAPWC) and the High-Level Task Force on Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV in Africa; and she initiated and chaired a High-Level Task Force on Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Services for Young People.

She continues her efforts in HIV prevention, treatment, and support as Co-Chair of the United Nations Global HIV Prevention Coalition, Co-Chair of Nursing Now Global Campaign, the United Nations Eminent Person for Women, Girls, and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa, and the International Council of Nurses Goodwill Ambassador for Girl Child Education.

Her honors include the Botswana Presidential Order of Honor, the Florence Nightingale Award from the International Red Cross Society, the Trailblazer Woman Leading Change Award from the World YWCA, the Leadership in Health Award from the Global Business Council (Health), the Lifetime Achievement in Global Health award from Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society for Nursing, the President’s Award from the United States’ National League for Nursing, the Princess Srinagarindra Award from Thailand, the Christianne Reimann Award from the International Council of Nurses, and the Princess Muna Al Hussein award from the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

She has been elected a foreign member of the United States National Academy of Medicine and of the American Academy of Nursing, which also honored her with the President’s Award. In 2014, alongside then-First Lady Michelle Obama, she was awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, from Dillard University, where she earned a B.S.N. in 1974. She also holds graduate degrees from the Catholic University of America and Columbia University.
Richard Vogel (School of Business)

The truest measure of any public research university is the contribution of students, faculty, staff and alumni to advancing our society. Our association with this community of individuals validates our existence as they champion our mission and the public good.

A seasoned marketing executive, professional manager and startup advisor, Richard Vogel ‘87 has spent a career shaping and translating ideas into successful marketing programs in the U.S. and abroad. He is a Founding Partner, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer of Loeb Enterprises, a New York-based private investor, focused on cultivating opportunities in emerging media and consumer marketing. He holds the same title at Loeb NYC, Loeb Enterprises' startup lab and venture arm. Mr. Vogel is responsible for the development and execution of current projects, as well as the financial management and administration of the company and its holdings.

Mr. Vogel earned a Bachelor of Science degree in finance, *Magna Cum Laude*, and was an *Honors Scholar* from the School of Business at the University of Connecticut in 1987. In 1990, he earned an MBA in Finance from the Stern School of Business at New York University.

Mr. Vogel is an Advisory Board member and financial supporter of the Werth Institute. Even as an undergraduate student, Mr. Vogel was a member of the Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity and the John F. Kennedy Institute for International Relations. Mr. Vogel is a member of the Constitution Circle of the Founders Society. In the community, he is a former board member and past President of the Stamford Jewish Community Center, where he also served as co-Chair of the Centennial Committee.