

Mercy University to Celebrate Over 2,300 Graduates at 2026 Commencement Ceremonies

Mercy University will honor the achievements of over 2,300 graduates on May 20- 21 at the Westchester County Center in White Plains, N.Y.

DOBBS FERRY, NY, UNITED STATES, May 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Mercy University will honor the achievements of over 2,300 graduates during its 2026 Commencement, held over four ceremonies on May 20 and 21 at the Westchester County Center in White Plains, N.Y. The ceremonies will feature five honorary degree recipients recognized for their exemplary leadership and professional excellence, including four who will deliver addresses to the Class of 2026.

"This is a proud moment for our entire Mercy University community as we launch the Class of 2026 into their careers," said Susan L. Parish, Ph.D., M.S.W., president of Mercy University. "These exceptional graduates—resilient, compassionate, and driven—are prepared to lead with purpose. We are equally honored by our five honorary degree recipients who built extraordinary careers by living the very values our students have embraced: service, innovation, and a commitment to creating positive change in the world."



Official seal for Mercy University

The ceremonies will be held in person and live streamed to ensure family members, friends, and guests can celebrate alongside the graduates regardless of location.

The 2026 Mercy University honorary degree recipients are:

Mark Ronquillo
Honorary Doctor of Commercial Science
Speaker: School of Business and School of Liberal Arts

Mark Ronquillo is the Donald P. Bellisario Professor of Practice at the Bellisario College of Communications at Penn State University, a position he assumed in 2024. Prior to joining Penn State, he served as EVP/Executive Creative Director at the New York City office of Saatchi & Saatchi, one of the world's leading international advertising agencies. Over his 15 years there, he led creative work for 12 different Procter & Gamble brands, including category leaders such as Dawn, Cascade, Swiffer, Vicks, Pepto-Bismol, Mr. Clean and Crest.

Mr. Ronquillo's 25+ year advertising career spans major agencies across the United States and internationally, including Saatchi & Saatchi, Publicis, Lowe & Partners, McCann Erickson, APL/London, BBDO West and The Richards Group. His diverse portfolio includes work for prominent brands such as Saab, Honda, Braun, Heineken, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Bacardi, Diet Coke, US Army, and Burger King.

A "writer's writer" known for his mastery of the written word, Mr. Ronquillo's creative work has earned recognition from major international award shows and publications, including Cannes, The One Show, Communication Arts, and Graphis. He has also received Effie awards for effectiveness across four different clients, demonstrating both creative excellence and measurable business impact.

Aramina Vega Ferrer, Ph.D.
Honorary Doctor of Pedagogy
Speaker: School of Education and School of Health and Natural Sciences

Aramina Vega Ferrer, Ph.D., is a long-time Bronx resident and former associate professor of Literacy and Multilingual Studies at Mercy University, where she prepared teacher candidates for advanced certificates and the Master of Science program in Teaching Literacy. While at Mercy University, she served as chair of the Department of Literacy and Multilingual Studies and founding director of the School of Education Bronx Parent Center, a first-of-its-kind faculty-led initiative working with Bronx families and educators to increase student achievement in Pre-K–12 and ensure college access.

Dr. Ferrer brings over 30 years of K-12 teaching and leadership experience in developing and implementing innovative instructional programs for culturally and linguistically diverse student

populations. Her career in the New York City school system progressed from Junior High School Teacher of Spanish and English as a Second Language to District Supervisor of Bilingual Education, culminating in her role as Elementary School Principal in the Bronx.

Dr. Ferrer was elected to the New York State Board of Regents by the New York State Legislature in March 2021 and reelected to a five-year term in March 2023, representing Judicial District 12 (The Bronx). She serves as Co-Chair of the Higher Education Committee, which oversees policy, chartering, and regulation for all postsecondary institutions in New York. Her numerous honors include the Lifetime Achievement Award from Fordham's Graduate School of Education, the Alumni Achievement Award from Lehman College and the Governor's Outstanding Hispanic Women Achievers Award.

Ena Williams, Ph.D., MBA, RN, CENP, FAAN, FADLN, FSIEN
Honorary Doctor of Science
Speaker: School of Nursing

Dr. Ena Williams is a nationally respected nursing executive and visionary leader who most recently served as Senior Vice President and Chief Nurse Executive of Yale New Haven Health, one of the nation's premier academic health systems. Her extraordinary career spans more than four decades, beginning in Jamaica at the University Hospital of the West Indies and evolving into pioneering executive leadership. She joined Yale New Haven Hospital in 1992, progressing through roles from staff nurse to coordinator, nurse manager, and nursing director before becoming the first nurse of color to serve as Vice President, Senior Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer of Yale New Haven Hospital, and Chief Nurse Executive of the Health System.

Under Dr. Williams' leadership as hospital CNO, nursing teams achieved remarkable recognition, including an American Credentialing Center Magnet Nurse of the Year award (2022) and a Magnet Prize (2024). She spearheaded transformative initiatives including a nursing leadership academy, the first Nursing DEI task force and summit and raised philanthropic funds to support nursing and unlicensed assistive personnel. Her tenure fostered significant growth in nursing autonomy and established a strong professional governance culture across the organization.

A nationally recognized thought leader in nursing leadership, workforce development, and health equity, Dr. Williams serves as President of the Board of the American Organization of Nursing Leadership and on The Joint Commission Board of Directors. She is a Fellow of both the American Academy of Nursing and the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing and has been honored as one of Modern Healthcare's 50 Top Clinical Executives in Healthcare (2024).

Reverend Viviana M. DeCohen '16, M.S. '18
Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters
Speaker: School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Reverend Viviana M. DeCohen, a proud United States Marine Corps Veteran, serves as

Commissioner of the New York State Department of Veterans' Services (DVS), which connects over 630,000 Veterans with the benefits, services, and support they have earned. Commissioner DeCohen oversaw the department's successful elevation from a division in April 2023, significantly expanding DVS's statewide reach. Under her leadership, DVS launched innovative outreach programs such as "Operation Find and Serve" and adopted 15 Veterans Welcome Center Digital Kiosks across New York State, which were recognized with the prestigious Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award from the Federal VA.

Commissioner DeCohen has championed inclusive communication and dignified service delivery, leading DVS to embrace the term "for those who have served" to reach individuals who may not identify as Veterans. She launched "Operation Baby," providing essential resources such as diapers, cribs, and baby clothes through a non-social service approach, and updated the department's intake form to better address the specialized needs of Veterans and Military Families. Prior to her appointment as Commissioner, she served as Director of the Mount Vernon Veterans Service Agency, where she founded Kristyn's Closet, a Veterans' Closet that served over 3,000 Veterans within ten months and garnered significant statewide media attention.

Commissioner DeCohen holds a bachelor's degree in behavioral science and a master's degree in Health Service Management from Mercy College (now University), where she established two inaugural Veterans Centers and served as a Veterans Academic Advisor. She is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Gerontology at Concordia University, Chicago. Her dedication to ensuring Veterans have access to essential resources has earned her the affectionate title of "Mama V," and she was named a Women Veteran Trailblazer honoree by the Center for Women Veterans in 2021.

Joseph P. Carlucci, Esq.
Honorary Doctor of Laws

Joseph Carlucci is Partner Emeritus at the law firm Cuddy & Feder LLP, where he was responsible for the industrial development revenue bond practice. Throughout his distinguished legal career, he represented corporations of all sizes on a full range of corporate matters, including business acquisitions and sales, partnership agreements, limited liability company operating agreements and employment contracts. Mr. Carlucci was also active in lending transactions on behalf of borrowers and lenders, and represented real estate entrepreneurs in acquisitions, sales, leasing, financing and obtaining approvals for development projects.

Mr. Carlucci is recognized as one of the region's most active counselors in industrial development agency revenue bond financing. He previously served as an agency chair before representing borrowers, underwriters and issuers in transactions throughout the New York metropolitan area and in numerous states across the country. A military veteran who served as Captain in the U.S. Army (MPC) from 1967-1969, Mr. Carlucci holds a B.A. in Economics from Georgetown University and a J.D. from Fordham University School of Law and was admitted to

the New York Bar in 1969.

A Westchester native, Mr. Carlucci has been active in numerous civic and professional organizations including the American Bar Association, Westchester County Bar Association, Jacob Burns Film Center, Pace University School of Law, Westchester Community College Foundation Board and the White Plains and Greenburgh Urban Renewal Agencies. He served as a Mercy Trustee from 2002 to 2025, previously serving as Board Vice Chair and now as Trustee Emeritus. He was honored with the Mercy College Community Leadership Award at the 2018 Trustees' Scholarship Gala.

For complete details about each of Mercy University's Commencement ceremonies, including date, time and location, and to watch the live stream, please visit <https://mercy.edu/campus-life/commencement-2026>.

###

About Mercy University

Mercy University is an independent, coeducational institution serving more than 9,000 students each year across campuses in Westchester, the Bronx, Manhattan, as well as online. It is a federally designated minority-serving institution and the largest private Hispanic Serving Institution in the state of New York. Mercy offers more than 100 undergraduate and graduate degree programs and certificate programs within six schools: Business, Education, Health and Natural Sciences, Liberal Arts, Nursing and Social and Behavioral Sciences. Mercy was founded in 1950 by the Sisters of Mercy whose mission of transformative education remains strong. For more information, visit www.mercy.edu.

Zodet Negron
Mercy University
[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/912812191>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.