



**Eastern Connecticut State University President Elsa Núñez speaks during the university's 2020 commencement exercises that took place virtually Tuesday due to the coronavirus pandemic.** Courtesy of ECSU

# ECSU graduates take the stage from home

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WILLIMANTIC — Eastern Connecticut State University's Class of 2020 donned mortarboards and tassels and crossed the stage during commencement ceremonies Tuesday night.

But the stage wasn't at the XL Center in Hartford.

The stage, their living rooms, was part of the university's first virtual commencement ceremony, a necessity given mandates against large gatherings during the coronavirus pandemic.

Eastern's 130th commencement ceremony was delivered Tuesday evening via YouTube, with graduates and their families following safely at home.

The video was taped in the concert hall of the ECSU Fine Arts Instructional Center at the Willimantic campus, with each speaker taping remarks separately in accordance with safety guidelines.

To add to their celebrations, Eastern graduates were mailed their diploma cover, the printed program for the evening and their mortarboard and



**Senior class vice president Emily Kerfoot offers up some words of wisdom.** Courtesy of ECSU

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# ECSU grads take stage from home

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tassel ahead of time.

Like other years, Eastern President Elsa Núñez congratulated the students for their hard work and accomplishments.

This year, however, the message was a little different.

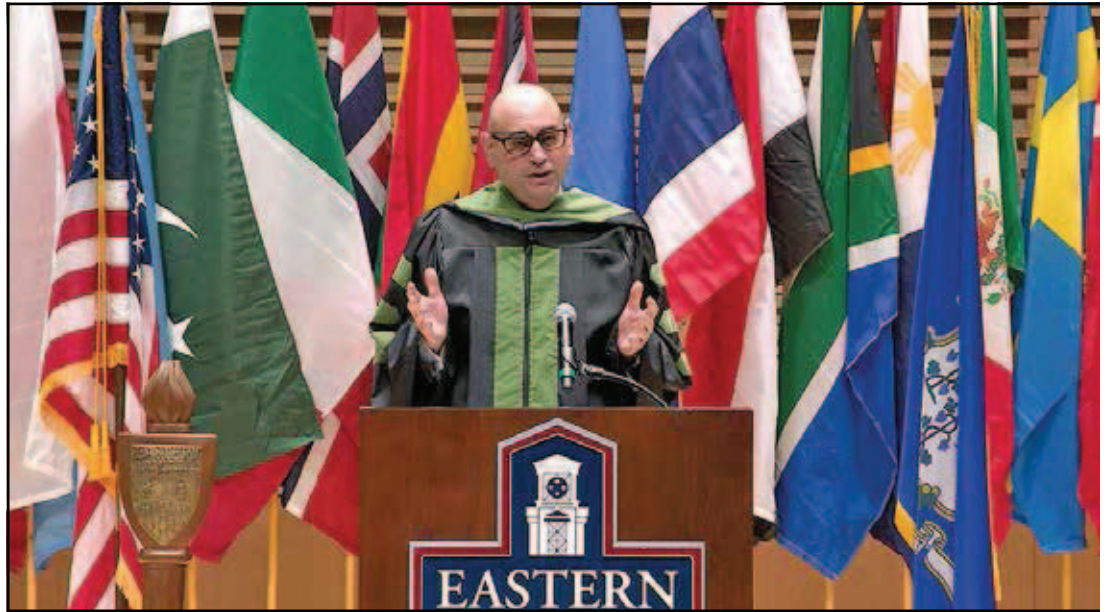
“We need your creative talents as we seek new medical procedures, tests, treatments and other solutions to our current circumstances,” Núñez said. “The problems you will help solve are not limited to health care, every corner of our society and every industry has been impacted.”

Núñez was joined by the commencement speaker, Cigna Executive Vice President and Chief Information Officer Mark Boxer.

In addition, Provost Bill Salka, University Senate President Andrew Utterback, Senior Class Vice President Emily Kerfoot and the Rev. Larry LaPointe of the Corpus Christi Catholic Community churches also spoke.

Kerfoot commended students on their college careers.

“Dr. Núñez frequently reminds Eastern students that she wants us to feel that we are elite, but never feel that we are elitists,” Kerfoot said. “Our liberal arts education gives us skills highly prized by U.S. employers and the ability to adapt to changes taking place in front of our eyes.”



**Mark Boxer, executive vice president and chief information officer at Cigna, speaks during Eastern Connecticut State University's virtual commencement Tuesday.** Courtesy of ECSU

More than 40 percent of the Class of 2020 are the first in their families to earn a bachelor's degree.

Approximately 90 percent of Eastern students are from 162 of the state's 169 towns, with more than 80 percent of graduates staying in Connecticut to work and live.

The university also draws students from 34 other states and 19 countries.

Boxer reminded all students to be kind to one another as they move forward in their lives.

“Be kind to others, and find ways to help people when and where you can,” Boxer said.

Following the speeches, graduates listened to a musical recording while all the



**Commencement packages were mailed to ECSU graduates in advance of the ceremony. They included a diploma cover, two copies of the evening's program and their mortarboard and tassel.** Courtesy of ECSU

graduates' names were displayed on the screen.

In total, as of this morning, about 7,000 people have viewed the virtual commencement.

*The video can be viewed on the Eastern Connecticut State University YouTube page.*

*Follow Claire Galvin on Twitter - @CGalvinTC.*