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CHEERS TO OUR NEWEST CAPTAINS FOR LIFE!

AUGUST AND DECEMBER GRADS CELEBRATE THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS WITH FAMILY,
FRIENDS AND FACULTY.

by [Kelley McGee](#) | December 13, 2023

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Celebratory energy filled the David Student Union Ballroom for an event that honored not only mid-year graduates, but the people who helped get them to the finish line. Each graduate had their own unique story. Some battled through pandemic chaos. Others, like Sarah Flinn, hustled and fast-tracked their collegiate journeys.

"I graduated in three and half years by taking summer classes and 17 credits for three semesters in a row," said Flinn, '23 [Cellular, Molecular and Physiological Biology](#).

In addition to the heavy course load, Flinn was part of the [President's Leadership Program \(PLP\)](#), the [Pre-Med Scholars Program](#), and was an ambassador for PLP. She also worked as a front desk assistant at the [Center for Student Success \(CSS\)](#) and tutored anatomy and physiology there.

"My heart resides in the Center for Student Success, where I have spent probably the most time while at CNU," said Flinn. "The work being done in the center is extraordinary, and it is so heartwarming

to see the dedication and devotion that both the tutors and the CSS professional staff have for the students on campus. I am so eternally grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of such an amazing team.”

While the celebration marked the end of their undergraduate journeys, it signaled the beginning of new possibilities as alums. Benjamin Dizon, CNU Football player and [Communication](#) major, is moving to New York City to pursue a career in the fashion industry.

“I’m taking with me so many awesome memories of my time on the field and in the classroom. I’m really excited for the next chapter and so ready to begin my career,” Dizon said.

Louise Byrne, ‘23 [Political Science](#), was thrilled to have her family by her side during the celebration. As a student, she challenged herself in countless ways, graduating in three and a half years while serving as an RA, taking part in PLP, helping to establish the new [Multicultural Center](#), and even giving a Ted Talk. “I am so grateful for all of these memories, along with friendships that I know will last a lifetime,” she said.

Each graduate, now a [Captain for Life](#), was presented with an Alumni Society pin, symbolizing their lifelong connection to CNU. They passed their pin on to a loved one, a tradition that reinforces the idea that the journey to graduation is a collective effort.

“On this very special evening, I ask that you take a moment from the festivities to pause and silently reflect on all those individuals in your life who have contributed to the journey that has brought you to this place and this time – your family, your friends, your classmates, and the outstanding faculty and staff of Christopher Newport,” said Nate Fontaine, President of the Alumni Society Board. “And one day, as you remember the grandeur of the Ferguson Center, the beauty of the Great Lawn, the cheers from the Stadium or the Freeman Center, the serenity of the Pope Chapel, and the chimes of the CNU Bell Tower, and you recall the friends and mentors of your youth, may you also be reminded that your outstanding accomplishments and achievements are truly a reflection of those who surround you and support you.”

President William G. Kelly congratulated the August and December graduates, and emphasized the importance of staying connected as alumni.

“Our alumni love this place, and we call upon all of them, and now you, to remain engaged with CNU,” Kelly said. “Captains for Life are regularly helping with the recruitment of future Captains, and helping to secure jobs and internships for both students and fellow alumni. They mentor and they serve their communities because they know being a Captain for Life requires engagement and service. And they also invest in this University to help ensure future generations don’t miss the opportunity to join our community and prepare for a life of significance.”

Ashley Nelson, ‘19, President of the Multicultural Alumni Chapter, led the graduates in reciting the Alumni Oath, which highlights the values and expectations of CNU alumni. Alums Sarah Crouse ‘13, Peyton Townsend ‘22, and Barb Ballve ‘15 accompanied the graduates in singing the Alma Mater. All mid-year grads are invited to come back in the spring to take part in Commencement.

The ceremony concluded with a toast by First Lady Angie Kelly, marking the end of the undergraduates’ academic endeavors and the beginning of a lifelong connection to the University.



Sarah Flinn '23