

► Houghton College

285 receive degrees from Houghton

HOUGHTON – To a standing ovation from family, friends, professors and administrators, 285 Houghton College seniors hailing from 20 different states and eight countries received their coveted diplomas during ceremonies Saturday at the John and Charles Wesley Chapel on the campus of Houghton College.

The moment signified the students' completion of an often intense, four-year journey consisting of studies, classes, exams – and the formation of deep and lasting friendships. The ceremony marked the 84th time the college has held commencement, resulting in more than 16,000 graduates entering the workforce since its founding in 1883.

Shirley A. Mullen, college president, welcomed honored guests and family of the class of 2009, saying to all while pointing to the assembled class on the platform of the Chapel, "This is their day." Addressing the graduates, who represented 40 different areas of academic study, she continued, "I invite you to live large."

In her presentation of academic degrees to the students, Dr. Mullen was assisted by Dr. Ronald Mahurin, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean of the college, and Mrs. Bobbie Strand, chair of the Houghton College Board of Trustees.

The awarding of degrees followed the commencement address delivered by Dr. Sabine U. O'Hara, executive director of the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, which provides oversight of the Fulbright Scholar Program, and vice president of the Institution of International Education.



Photo submitted

Adam A. Potter receives his Masters in Music degree and a handshake from Houghton College President Shirley A. Mullen.

To the playing of the well known hymn "This is my Father's world," Dr. O'Hara presented the graduating students with the question, "What world is this?" She answered rhetorically, "This is your world and it is still the world of our Creator." She urged the graduates to remember three characteristics of the world

they are entering as guidance for success in it.

The first characteristic is its vast diversity. But she noted that many people are not prepared for this diversity because it requires an understanding of different languages, cultures, customs and perceptions.

"Fewer than 10 percent of college graduates have interna-

tional experience," she noted. Referring to Houghton's intercultural studies, "But more than 40 percent of Houghton College graduates have international experience. You're way ahead of the game."

Secondly, she observed that our diverse world is highly interconnected as evidenced by the recent economic situation and its broad, global nature. Dr. O'Hara challenged the graduates to be keenly aware of this interconnectedness and understand the challenges it presents.

"We need your best minds to address these problems," she said.

Thirdly, she urged graduating seniors to intentionally interact with the diverse, interconnected world through becoming involved in their culture to make a positive difference. She referenced popular computer environments where college students can exist in virtual worlds.

But in life after graduation, she pointed out, "It's not all about the virtual worlds. It's about real people, real connections and the real world around us."

Additionally, the prestigious Houghton Medal, an honor conferred on a deserving person by Houghton College, has been presented to Robert Kresse, a distinguished attorney from Buffalo who has served as an advocate of many public causes.

The graduating seniors presented the college with a gift consisting of a new communion table and pulpit to be installed in the Wesley Chapel Prayer Room. The room was damaged by water several years ago and is in the process of restoration.

Cited for special honors were:

- **Valedictorian** – Bethany G. Tennent from Ipswich, Ma.;
 - **Salutatorian** – Kyle S. Vitale from Altamont.
- Departmental research honors were also bestowed upon the following students:
- **Computer Science** – David King of Houghton;
 - **Education** – Claire L. Essley of Rochester and Rebecca M. Stafford of Du Bois, Pa.;
 - **Mathematics** – April

- R. Bowers of Lehigh, Pa. and Mindy M. Swancott of Boonville;
- **Music** – Emma R. McConnell of Mc Lean;
- **Philosophy** – Brittany Gentry of Gaston, S.C.;
- **Political Science** – Katarina E. Kieffer of Mc Clure, Ohio;
- **Psychology** – Kathryn H. Dineen of Cayuga;
- **Religion** – Shannon M. Tilley of Kernersville, N.C.