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May commencement speakers announced



Kenneth I. Chenault, CEO of American Express, will deliver the 108th commencement address at Northeastern.

March 22, 2010

Kenneth I. Chenault, chairman and chief executive officer of American Express Company, will deliver the **Northeastern University commencement** address to the Class of 2010 on May 7, 2010, at TD Garden.

In addition to Chenault, Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Victoria Reggie Kennedy, lawyer and political advocate, will each receive honorary degrees during the morning ceremony in front of 20,000 undergraduate students, family members and friends.

Honorary degrees also will be given to Jagdish N.

Bhagwati, University Professor at Columbia University and Senior

Fellow in International Economics at the Council on Foreign Relations, and to Harold Hongju Koh, legal advisor to the U.S. Department of State and former dean of Yale Law School. Bhagwati will address graduate students during the afternoon ceremony and Koh will speak during the School of Law's commencement ceremony on May 28th.

Chenault, credited with transforming American Express into the world's preeminent financial services firm and travel company, is an innovative business strategist, an inspiring mentor and a dedicated civic leader. Chenault is also known for his deep personal commitment to philanthropy and to the communities in which employees and customers live and work.

"Ken Chenault is one of the world's most talented and admired business leaders," said Joseph E. Aoun, president of Northeastern. "In addition to running a truly global company, he is a great civic leader in New York City and beyond. His track record of innovation and leadership exemplifies many of Northeastern's strongest qualities. Our graduates will benefit from his experience and wisdom."

After joining American Express in 1981 as director for strategic planning, Chenault quickly rose through the ranks by dramatically improving the performance of several divisions. He became president and chief operating officer in 1997 and assumed his current responsibilities as CEO and chairman in 2001.

Chenault serves on the boards of numerous corporate and nonprofit organizations that cover a broad range of business sectors and causes. His public service leadership has been recognized with numerous awards. A graduate of Bowdoin College and Harvard Law School, Chenault is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Vartan Gregorian has served as president of Carnegie Corporation of New York since 1997, following his nine-year service as president of Brown University. A history scholar, he has taught at San Francisco State College and UCLA and served as provost of the University of Pennsylvania before taking over as president of the New York Public Library in 1981.

"Heralded around the world for his visionary leadership and gifted intellect, Vartan Gregorian has influenced generations of scholars and steered many institutions to greatness," said Aoun. "It is an honor to have him join the Northeastern family."

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2010

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

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A graduate of Stanford University, Gregorian is an author and a recipient of numerous fellowships. He serves on the boards of prominent business and nonprofit organizations.

Victoria Reggie Kennedy, a leading expert on banking law, a social and political advocate and widow of the late Senator Edward M. Kennedy, is president and cofounder of Common Sense about Kids and Guns, a nonpartisan organization created to raise awareness about gun safety.

“When it comes to public service, Vicki Kennedy is an inspiration for each one of us,” said Aoun. “Her tireless efforts to protect children from handgun violence and to expand access to education and health care for citizens in every corner of our nation — from rural landscapes to the heart of our cities — are unparalleled.”

A graduate of Newcomb College of Tulane University and Tulane Law School, Kennedy serves on the boards of numerous organizations and leads efforts to address homelessness, domestic violence, education, and health care.

At the afternoon ceremony where advanced degrees will be awarded, Jagdish Bhagwati will address Northeastern’s graduate students and their families.

Bhagwati has been Economic Policy Adviser to Arthur Dunkel, Director General of GATT (1991-93), Special Adviser to the UN on Globalization, and External Adviser to the WTO. He has served on the Expert Group appointed by the Director General of the WTO on the Future of the WTO and the Advisory Committee to Secretary General Kofi Annan on the NEPAD process in Africa, and was also a member of the Eminent Persons Group under the chairmanship of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso on the future of UNCTAD.

Harold Hongju Koh will address nearly 200 graduating law students during the May 28th commencement exercises. Koh has served as both a professor and dean of the Yale Law School, serves as legal advisor to the United States Department of State and is a leading expert on public and private international law, national security law and human rights.

“Harold Koh demonstrates an unwavering commitment to human rights and to Constitutional principles in everything that he does,” said Emily Spieler, dean of Northeastern’s School of Law. “As a leading expert in international, humanitarian and national security law, he is able to affect the outcome of the great legal debates of our day.”

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Undergraduate commencement ceremony will be held at TD Garden on Friday, May 7th, at 10:30 a.m.

Afternoon ceremony for advanced degree recipients will take place at Northeastern’s Matthews Arena on Friday, May 7th, at 3:30 p.m.

School of Law commencement will take place at Northeastern’s Matthews Arena on Friday, May 28th, at 1:00 p.m.