



Macaulay Honors College  
The City University of New York  
35 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street New York, NY 10023

**Contact Info:**  
Sheila Stainback, 212-729-2924  
[sheila.stainback@mhc.cuny.edu](mailto:sheila.stainback@mhc.cuny.edu)

## **For Immediate Release**

### **Macaulay Honors College to Graduate Its Most Award-Winning Class**

*Class of 2015 includes 31 students with valedictorian or salutatorian honors*

**(May 27, 2015, New York, NY)** – With a class that includes the largest number of prestigious award-winners in its young history, including eight Fulbright scholars, Macaulay Honors College at The City University of New York will graduate more than 400 students at the school’s 14th Commencement ceremony. More than 2,500 students, family and friends will attend the graduation led by Macaulay Dean Ann Kirschner on Tuesday, June 2, 2015 at 6:30pm at Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

The Macaulay commencement speaker is CNN host Fareed Zakaria of the international program *Fareed Zakaria GPS*, as well as a best-selling author. Zakaria’s latest book *In Defense of a Liberal Education* calls for a renewal of a commitment to a broad general education and highlights this American tradition as a driver of economic growth and personal fulfillment.

The student speaker at Macaulay’s ceremony, chosen by a selection process, is **Geoffrey Mercene** ’15 Macaulay Honors College at Brooklyn College, a Horace W. Goldsmith and Lisa Goldberg/Revson scholar. Mercene is a first generation Filipino-American who plans to spend the summer in the Philippines as head of a logistics committee helping communities hit by natural disasters.

In addition to the distinguished award winners, Macaulay’s Class of 2015 includes 31 students who have earned valedictorian or salutatorian honors at seven senior CUNY colleges, and three Macaulay students who will have distinguished speaking roles at those commencement ceremonies.

Valedictorians to address their graduating class include **Kawsar Ibrahim** (College of Staten Island) and **Abhinaya Swaminathan** (Baruch College). **Lauren Blachorsky**, a winner of Queens College’s Paul Kapper Award, will deliver that school’s Baccalaureate address.

Other noteworthy students in the Macaulay Class of 2015 include:

**Paula Garcia-Salazar** (City College) was born in Quito, Ecuador and after arriving in the U.S. at age 7, watched her family navigate the immigrant system. Garcia-Salazar will use those experiences as she begins a two-year fellowship at the Immigrant Justice Corps helping to provide direct legal services to underserved immigrant communities in New York City.

**Ebrahim Afshinnekoo** (Queens College) co-authored a news-making research project that looked at the presence of various pathogens on New York City's subways. Afshinnekoo has won the Jonas Salk award, an honor given to eight CUNY seniors who are bound for medical school. Macaulay students won four of the Salk scholarships this year. Afshinnekoo has been admitted to New York Medical College.

-###-