

## Veteran's Excellence Award Gala William Joiner Institute

March 29th the William Joiner Institute (WJI) for the Study of War and Social Consequences (WJI) hosted the first annual Veterans' Excellence Award Gala that took place in UMass Boston's Campus Center Ballroom. The extraordinary event honored all who have served, highlighting their post-service work. The mission of the William Joiner Institute is to celebrate, research, and support veterans past, present and future to inform, develop and implement equitable policies, programs, and pathways to help



ensure the health, safety, well-being, and success of veterans, their families, and others impacted by war or military service, without exception.

The MC for the evening Co-Director Thomas Miller, a US Coast Guard Veteran, began his opening remarks with a playful joke, "How many Vets does it takes to MC an event? None, just tell the Coast Guard guys to do it," causing the crowd to erupt into laughter. Following the introduction, The U.S.S. Constitution Color Guard presented the colors while the Coast Guard band played the National Anthem and the

Coast Guard Academy's Fairwinds Ensemble sang.



The event honored 12 Veterans from around the country for their continuing self-less service in their post-service careers, and featured many Boston locals including Provost Joseph Berger,

Secretary Jon Santiago, and Arthur Mabbett (69') as well as members of the WJI team including UMass Boston PACE Apprentices Ayla Rich (Environmental Science), Neelesh Kashyap (Nursing), and Armani Roberson (Hospitality Management), Veteran Affairs Work Study students Nicole SanJuan (UMB Ph.D.), Josh Paille (UCONN MBA), and Muhammad Jamil (UCONN Mechanical Engineering), and the WJI Director, Brendan O'Connor. As the evening progressed, Arthur Mabbett delivered a heartfelt keynote speech followed by Brendan O'Connor's awarding of the WJI Director's Excellence Award, awarded to Dr. Roger F. Harris. Following Dr. Harris' powerful, emotional, and thought-provoking the night was capped off by the announcement of a new partnership with XRTERRA to establish a new UMass Boston Student Veteran group to explore the Metaverse.



*(From L to R) Ayla Rich, Provost Joseph Berger, Neelesh Kashyap.*

With the generous support from their sponsors including Arthur and Beverly Mabbett, Mabbett Associates, Veterans Tactical Supply, Veterans Business Supply, Technical Assent, Metcalf Facilities Group, Citizens Energy and XRTERRA, the WJI team was able to put on a spectacular event



*(From L to R) Dr. Roger F. Harris*



*Arthur Mabbett, Roger F. Harris, Brendan O'Connor, Thomas Miller.*