

# Former Under Secretary of State Named Commencement Speaker

**Sr. Margaret Leonard, LSA CE'64 and Peter Deckers, M.D. AP'58 to also Receive Honorary Degrees**

R. Nicholas Burns, the former under secretary of state for political affairs and senior American career diplomat, will serve as speaker at Assumption's 91st Commencement exercises on May 17.

Burns served as under secretary of state for political affairs from March 2005 until March 2008. He has held top jobs under Republican and Democratic administrations and worked on Russian affairs at the National Security Council under presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton (1990-95). He was also spokesman for secretaries of state Madeleine Albright and Warren Christopher.

He served as under secretary of state from March 2005 until his March 2008 resignation. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, "Whether we've worked together in times that have seemed to be always going our way or in times when life has been a little hard, it's been great to be doing it with my friend, Nick Burns. And Nick, while you will be stepping down as public affairs director, you will never be stepping down as my friend." Burns has received several awards and honors during his career, including the State Department's Superior Honor Award for outstanding performance

three times. Raised in Massachusetts, he earned the Certificat Pratique de Langue Francaise from the University of Paris (Sorbonne), a B.A. from Boston College and a master's degree with distinction from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He speaks French, Arabic, and Greek.

Also receiving an honorary degree will be Sr. Margaret Leonard, LSA CE'64 and Peter Deckers, M.D. AP'58.

One of the College's first female graduates, since 1985 Sr. Margaret has served as executive director of Project HOPE in Roxbury, which partners with Boston-area families to move them up and out of homelessness and poverty, and leads joint efforts to prevent homelessness. She received, on behalf of Project HOPE, the 2007 Award for Excellence in Community Development from the Massachusetts Investment Corporation. It is one among a litany of awards she has received for the commitment, care and respect that distinguish her efforts to end homelessness.

In addition to fostering personal transformation in her clients, Sr. Margaret has been a catalyst in forging strategic alliances, partnerships and collaborations at local, city and state levels that create a



R. Nicholas Burns

continuum of care and support for low income families in the movement from crisis to stability. A co-chair of Boston Mayor Thomas Menino's Committee on Homelessness, Sr. Margaret has long served on the Boards of the Pine Street Inn, Homes for Families, and the Dudley Street (Roxbury) Neighborhood Initiative.

Peter Deckers AP'58 has enjoyed a distinguished medical career, highlighted by a successful cancer surgical practice, leadership of departments of surgery and surgical residency training programs. On June 30 he will step down from his positions of dean of the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and executive vice president of health affairs at UConn Health Center. His tenure of the Health Center was marked by the transformation of the educational curriculum, by a dramatic increase in patient care and by strong growth in public and private research awards to biomedical scientists and clinicians.

A stand-out basketball player for Assumption Prep, Deckers chaired a Centennial Campaign subcommittee which successfully raised nearly \$500,000 to construct the Assumption Prep Auditorium in Kennedy Memorial Hall in 2006. ❖



Sr. Margaret Leonard, LSA CE'64



Peter Deckers, M.D. AP'58