

The Class of 1964 Outstanding Leadership Award

Nathaniel C. Fick '99, you have been an outstanding leader in all stages of your life. As a Dartmouth undergraduate, you graduated with High Honors in Classics and won a U.S. National championship in cycling. As a Dartmouth alumnus, you served on the Board of Visitors of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Public Policy and the Social Sciences from 2007 to 2012 and have served on the Board of Trustees of the College since 2012. As a military officer, you served with distinction as a Marine Corps infantry and reconnaissance officer including combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. As an author, you have described your Marine experiences in a highly acclaimed book, *One Bullet Away: The Making of a Marine Officer*, which was a *New York Times* bestseller, a *Washington Post* “Best Book of the Year,” and one of the *Military Times* “Best Military Books of the Decade.” With an MBA from the Harvard Business School, you are an operating partner of Bessemer Venture Partners and have served as the CEO of two companies: the Center for a New American Security, a national security research organization, and EndGame, Inc., a venture-backed cyber security company. With an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School, you are serving as a director of the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

All of those accomplishments would surely qualify you to be the first recipient of this distinguished award who is not a member of the Dartmouth Class of 1964, which established it upon the occasion of our 50th reunion. However, what makes you even more deserving, in the eyes of our classmates, is your dedication to the importance of educating more young leaders to address the challenges we face as a nation and throughout the world. You have dedicated much of your adult life not only to becoming the best leader you can be but also to teaching others what it takes to be an effective leader.

Leadership requires both a mindset to change the world for the better and a set of specific skills to bring about that change. Leaders must organize and mobilize teams of people – communicating with and listening to them, motivating and inspiring them, and setting priorities. Your life experiences have convinced you that these skills can be learned by everyone. As a member of the United States Marines, which you have described as “the most intense leadership experience I could ever have,” you affirmed that you “learn(ed) more about leadership being a Marine than doing almost anything else.” You are committed to assuring that all Dartmouth undergraduates can become better leaders, in whatever field of endeavor they choose.

You not only believe that leadership skills can be learned but also that they can be taught. You started that process by sharing with others what you learned about leadership in your book. You also have been an articulate and ardent spokesperson for comprehensive leadership training during every student’s time at Dartmouth. You were an influential member of the Board of Visitors of the Rockefeller Center when it outlined the case for leadership development on campus and developed its initial programs for teaching leadership skills. You have continued that advocacy on the Board of Trustees in support of President Hanlon’s vision “to prepare our students to be leaders who will meet the world’s great challenges.” You lead by example. For the last decade, you have annually led one of the sessions offered through the Rockefeller Leadership Fellows program. You have described these Fellows as “eager to hear, eager to listen, eager to talk and to share, [and] eager to learn.” Like any good educator, you are energized by your work, and your enthusiasm for leadership is infectious. Students routinely rate your presentation as the best of the year.

While teaching and learning skills are a critical first step in becoming a leader, you have emphasized another step that the members of the Class of 1964 have found to be essential in their own leadership development – the importance of practicing those skills and refining them in response to feedback. You have said, “leadership is not only taught,” “experiential learning matters,” and “it all has to be participatory in nature.” Those insights flow naturally from your life experiences. You were trained by the Marines in a classroom to be a platoon leader, but you learned to become an effective platoon leader on the fields of combat.

Your life experiences remind us that leadership is not the “end game.” It is an indispensable tool that can be used to make a difference in the world. That concept resonates among Dartmouth’s students. They have “big ideas” themselves and will also be exposed to other “big ideas” by Dartmouth faculty. But what they are searching for is guidance about how to put those “big ideas” into action to change the world. You have said in your book, “complex ideas must be made simple or they’ll remain ideas and never be put into action.” That is the essence of leadership and yet another one of the valuable lessons you are sharing with the generation that will become tomorrow’s leaders and solve the intractable problems that are plaguing us today.

Nathaniel C. Fick, for all of these reasons, on behalf of all of the members of the great Class of 1964, we thank you for your inspiring service and your dedication to training effective leaders, and we are proud to honor you with the Class of 1964 Outstanding Leadership Award.

Given this 6th day of November 2015, in Hanover, New Hampshire.