RESOLVED, that The College of Staten Island award Dr. Khalid Iqbal the degree of Doctor of Science and Mr. John Douglas Thompson the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, at the college’s annual commencement ceremony on June 2, 2016.

EXPLANATION: Dr. Iqbal is a world-renowned Alzheimer disease researcher. He was the first to describe in 1974 the bulk isolation and protein composition of neurofibrillary tangles/paired helical filaments (PHF) from Alzheimer disease brains. In 1986 he, along with Dr. Inge Grundke-Iqbal, discovered that the PHF protein and the microtubule-associated protein tau are the same and that tau in PHF is hyperphosphorylated. Their search for an upstream-to-tau-pathology event led them to neurotrophic factors. In 1999 they discovered that CNTF could neutralize the FGF-2-mediated tau hyperphosphorylation in adult rat hippocampal neuroprogenitor cells and then, in 2003, they demonstrated that the pharmacologic enhancement of the dentate gyrus neurogenesis could improve the cognitive performance in adult rats. These pioneering studies led Drs. Iqbal and Grundke-Iqbal to the development of CNTF peptidergic compounds and a novel therapeutic approach that involved shifting the balance from neurodegeneration to the regeneration of the brain. They have shown that the CNFT peptidergic compounds can rescue cognitive impairment by rescuing the neurogenesis and the neuronal plasticity deficits in rodent models of familial and sporadic Alzheimer disease and Down syndrome. Most recently, Dr. Iqbal has generated an experimental rat model of the sporadic form of Alzheimer disease and discovered the etiopathogenic mechanisms of this disease involving ischemia, an environmental factor and an endotoxin.

Mr. John Douglas Thompson is a distinguished classical actor. He has been hailed by Ben Brantley of the New York Times as "one of the most compelling actors of his generation," and by renowned Columbia University Shakespeare scholar Jim Shapiro in the New Yorker as "the greatest classical actor" in America. Mr. Thompson has performed in all of Shakespeare's plays, and has been hailed for his leading roles as Othello and Macbeth at Theatre for a New Audience, and Antony in Antony and Cleopatra at Hartford Stage. In addition to being known as a Shakespeare specialist, Mr. Thompson has played the eponymous hero in Eugene O'Neill’s, The Emperor Jones at the Irish Repertory Theatre; originated the role of “Satchmo” in Terry Teachout’s Satchmo; and took on the leading role of “Ira Aldridge” in Lolita Chakrabarti’s Red Velvet at Shakespeare and Company—all to enthusiastic acclaim. Most recently he played “Joe” in the acclaimed Chicago production of Eugene O'Neill's The Iceman Cometh, which was brought to Brooklyn Academy of Music in February 2015, and last year he also tread the boards as Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine at Theatre for a New Audience. This season he will be playing the leading male roles in Henrik Ibsen’s A Doll’s House and August Strindberg’s The Father at Theatre for a New Audience.
KHALID IQBAL

Khalid Iqbal is Professor and Chairman, Department of Neurochemistry at the New York State Institute for Basic Research in Developmental Disabilities, Staten Island, New York. He received his Ph.D. in Biochemistry in 1969 from the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, U.K. Dr. Iqbal is a world-renowned Alzheimer disease researcher. He was the first to describe in 1974 the bulk isolation and protein composition of neurofibrillary tangles/paired helical filaments (PHF) from Alzheimer disease brains. In 1986 he, along with Dr. Inge Grundke-Iqbal, discovered that the PHF protein and the microtubule-associated protein tau are the same and that tau in PHF is hyperphosphorylated. Their search for an upstream-to-tau-pathology event led them to neurotrophic factors. In 1999 they discovered that CNTF could neutralize the FGF-2-mediated tau hyperphosphorylation in adult rat hippocampal neuroprogenitor cells and then, in 2003, they demonstrated that the pharmacologic enhancement of the dentate gyrus neurogenesis could improve the cognitive performance in adult rats. These pioneering studies led Drs. Iqbal and Grundke-Iqbal to the development of CNTF peptidergic compounds and a novel therapeutic approach that involved shifting the balance from neurodegeneration to the regeneration of the brain. They have shown that the CNFT peptidergic compounds can rescue cognitive impairment by rescuing the neurogenesis and the neuronal plasticity deficits in rodent models of familial and sporadic Alzheimer disease and Down syndrome. Most recently, Dr. Iqbal has generated an experimental rat model of the sporadic form of Alzheimer disease and discovered the etiopathogenic mechanisms of this disease involving ischemia, an environmental factor and an endotoxin.

Dr. Iqbal is the recipient of many prestigious honors and awards, including the Potamkin Prize for Alzheimer’s Disease research from the American Academy of Neurology, and the Zenith Award from the Alzheimer’s Association, U.S.A. He founded and chaired the biennial International Conference on Alzheimer’s Disease from 1988 to 2008. In 2007, Alzheimer’s Association, USA established a Khalid Iqbal Life Time Achievement Award for Alzheimer’s Disease Research, which is given out annually at the International Conference on Alzheimer’s Disease (ICAD) to a senior established Alzheimer disease researcher. Dr. Iqbal has authored over 300 scientific papers in prestigious American and international scientific journals and edited seven books on research advances in Alzheimer disease and related neurodegenerative disorders. He currently serves on the editorial boards of several journals.
Mr. Thompson is a distinguished classical actor who has made several visits to the college to speak to students taking courses in Shakespeare. He has been hailed by Ben Brantley of the New York Times as "one of the most compelling actors of his generation," and by renowned Columbia University Shakespeare scholar Jim Shapiro in the New Yorker as "the greatest classical actor" in America. Mr. Thompson has performed in all of Shakespeare's plays, and has been hailed for his leading roles as Othello and Macbeth at Theatre for a New Audience, and Antony in Antony and Cleopatra at Hartford Stage. In addition to being known as a Shakespeare specialist, Mr. Thompson has played the eponymous hero in Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones at the Irish Repertory Theatre; originated the role of “Satchmo” in Terry Teachout's Satchmo; and took on the leading role of "Ira Aldridge” in Lolita Chakrabarti’s Red Velvet at Shakespeare and Company—all to enthusiastic acclaim. Most recently he played “Joe” in the acclaimed Chicago production of Eugene O'Neill's The Iceman Cometh, which was brought to Brooklyn Academy of Music in February 2015, and last year he also trod the boards as Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine at Theatre for a New Audience. This season he will be playing the leading male roles in Henrik Ibsen’s A Doll’s House and August Strindberg’s The Father at Theatre for a New Audience.

Mr. Thompson's journey to prominence follows a trajectory similar to that of many of our students. Born in England to Jamaican immigrants, he moved to Canada while he was an infant and then to upstate New York. He took a business degree at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, making his living as a traveling computer salesman for several years when, at the age of 29, he lost his job. While scouring the classifieds, he came across an ad for an acting audition. Recalling how moved he was when he saw August Wilson's Joe Turner's Come and Gone a few years earlier, he decided to give acting—which he knew nothing about—a try. All he knew was that he felt he wanted to move audiences the way he had been moved. He knew so little about the profession of acting, he did not even know there were schools for it. His natural talent eventually led him to the Trinity Repertory Theatre in Providence, Rhode Island, where he earned an MFA in Acting, then to Shakespeare and Company in Lenox, Massachusetts, for more training, and finally to New York City.

Mr. Thompson moves audiences with his psychologically realistic, emotionally open, and poetically refined acting. Mr. Thompson is driven by his devotion to promoting understanding through the arts. He has dedicated his career to breaking down racial barriers and unconscious biases, paving the way for a younger generation, while helping to transform the present one. Further, he has generously taken time out of his hectic schedule on four different occasions over the years to visit the College of Staten Island and speak with our students about Shakespeare, about life, and about his personal story. During his visits he has read and performed with the students.