

Hollywood legend to speak at graduation

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STOCKTON - He's won Oscars, been elected mayor of Carmel, even served on the California State Park and Recreation Commission.

Yet legendary Hollywood figure Clint Eastwood could find himself playing second banana at next month's commencement at University of the Pacific.

As it stands, the keynote address will be given by Stockton native and Pacific grad Jose Hernandez, the son of migrant farm workers who earned his NASA astronaut pin earlier this year.

The speaking schedule is still being worked out, Pacific spokeswoman Lauren Hersh said. But would they dare give Dirty Harry anything less than top billing?

"No disrespect to Mr. Eastwood. He's quite accomplished," Hersh said. "But this is very much a part of who we are. (Jose's) story is such an incredible illustration of what a Pacific education can do."

Eastwood, of spaghetti Western and "Dirty Harry" fame, twice won Academy awards for movie directing in his latter Hollywood career. He also served as mayor of Carmel-By-The-Sea and was expected to speak at last year's commencement until a scheduling conflict arose. Both he and Hernandez will be presented with honorary degrees at this year's event, being held at the Alex G. Spanos Center on May 20.

A former farm worker himself, Hernandez, 43, graduated from Franklin High School in Stockton before earning his engineering degree at Pacific. He later attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, and worked at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory before entering the NASA program. He's not yet flown in space.

His choice as keynote speaker wouldn't bother Char Wilson. The MBA candidate, who is graduating next month, said her family's excited.

"I understand (he is) a Pacific alum," Wilson said. "I'm sure he will draw a great crowd. ... Especially being a Latino, I'm interested in hearing what he has to say."

Also on the bill is Pacific alum and jazz great Dave Brubeck. The jazz great is a friend of Eastwood's; the actor serves as honorary chairman of the school's Brubeck Institute. Brubeck will be given a "special award," according to the university.

The event starts at 8:30 a.m. For more information on obtaining tickets, visit www.pacific.edu/commencement or call (209) 946-2867.

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