

1,200 students set to graduate May 15

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/2709/1200-students-set-to-graduate-may-15/>

More than 1,200 graduate and undergraduate students will receive degrees at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's 136th commencement ceremony Saturday, May 15, at Kolf Sports Center.

The 9 a.m. ceremony will be for undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Letters and Science. A 2 p.m. ceremony will include students in the colleges of business, education and human services, and nursing. The afternoon ceremony will feature a processional led by nearly two dozen alumni from the class of 1960.

Five exceptional graduates share their stories:

May graduate is youngest fire chief in the U.S.

The nation's youngest fire chief, Justin Heim, 27, will be among the Center for New Learning graduates participating in the 9 a.m. ceremony. Heim will earn a bachelor's degree in Fire and Emergency Response Management. This spring, he won the Lifelong Learner Scholarship for Academic Excellence, awarded to a UW Oshkosh student who transferred to the University, has a grade-point average of 3.6 or higher, and has a history of volunteer and community service.

Heim, who became the youngest known fire chief in the United States in 2008 when he took a post in the Eagle Fire Department, manages a mix of 40 volunteer and full-time staff and is responsible for covering the territory of two municipalities in southeast Wisconsin.

- [Read more about Justin Heim and the Fire and Emergency Response Management program.](#)

Support from campus community helps single mother

When Hannah Westphal was a sophomore at UW Oshkosh, she discovered she was pregnant. Her family was immediately concerned that she wouldn't follow through with her education after she became a mother. But thanks to the support of her parents, her professors and her classmates, Westphal will graduate with a bachelor's degree in business administration with an emphasis in human resources this May. Westphal credits her success to the support of the campus community, which offered encouragement and support. Since having her son, she has appeared on the honor roll every semester.

"To my professors and classmates, thank you for helping me be a good student while also being a great mother," she said. "You have all contributed to my being able to achieve these tremendous things for my family."

Student leader helps win grant for e-textbooks

Criminal justice major Alex Abendschein believed that there was a better way to produce textbooks. His interest led him to chair a working group that was ultimately awarded a nearly \$300,000 grant to develop an innovative e-textbook program at UW Oshkosh. While a student, Abendschein served as president of United Students in Residence Halls, vice president of the Oshkosh Student Association and as a leadership development specialist for Residence Life. He also participated as an instructor for the “Inviting Convicts to College” program.

Abendschein will pursue a master’s degree in college student development at Kansas State University while serving as an assistant coordinator for departmental initiatives in the Department of Housing and Dining.

- [Read more about the e-textbooks initiative.](#)

Graduation Project provides support to returning students

When Nick Mocco left UW Oshkosh in 2004, he was three courses short of graduating. When Mocco received a postcard from the Graduation Project inviting him to come back and finish his degree, he talked to his wife. Together they decided he should come back to UW Oshkosh. The Graduation Project works with returning students who are close to graduating by giving them a step-by-step academic plan and connecting them with University offices and departments. Mocco says that sharing the experience with the Graduation Project and other adult students has made his return to UW Oshkosh easier.

Mocco will graduate with a Bachelor of Science in human services. He currently works full time as a relationship manager for Schneider National in Green Bay, Wis.

- [Read more about Nick Mocco and the Graduation Project.](#)

A conversation changes a life

Sarah Lind may have taken eight years to graduate, but the lessons she learned along the way have helped her find a career she is passionate about. Lind began her college career majoring in music. At the first university she attended, she was told she wasn’t making enough progress to continue, so she transferred to UW Oshkosh. She soon realized her heart wasn’t in music, but she wasn’t sure where to go from there. One of her music professors put her in touch with a professor in radio-TV-film, who talked to her about a career in radio. That conversation led her to a major that excites her. After graduation, she will be pursuing a career in radio.

“That moment changed my life,” she said. “I finally found something that I was good at and loved to do. I jumped into my major with a new excitement for learning and met a lot of great professors who both challenged and inspired me.”

More commencement coverage:

- [May graduate is youngest fire chief in the U.S. \(4/30/10\)](#)
- [UWO honors national leader in higher education \(5/5/10\)](#)
- [1,200 students set to graduate May 15 \(5/10/10\)](#)
- [Commencement speakers optimistic about future \(5/11/10\)](#)

- [UW Oshkosh honors 17 graduating seniors with Chancellor's Award for Excellence \(5/13/10\)](#)
- [Keynote speaker: Rehearsal is over; life begins \(5/15/10\)](#)
- [Class speaker: 'You need to see your sawdust' \(5/15/10\)](#)
- [Keynote speaker: Transitions are time to reflect, learn \(5/15/10\)](#)
- [Class speaker: Graduation is a prelude to future excellence \(5/15/10\)](#)
- [Seen on campus: May 2010 commencement \(5/15/10\)](#)
- [Seen on campus: Class of 1960 alumni luncheon \(5/17/10\)](#)