

## **Commencement speakers optimistic about future**

by Amanda Munger - Tuesday, May 11, 2010

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/2717/commencement-speakers-optimistic-about-future/>

**Melanie Stepanek** continues a family tradition as a commencement speaker for the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's spring 2010 commencement ceremony May 15.

Stepanek's older brother, Joel, was a commencement speaker at the 2007 ceremony. Now the two siblings are putting some pressure on their younger brother, UW Oshkosh freshman Nathan Stepanek, to follow in their footsteps.

"We like to make fun of him for the speaker thing," she said. "He's a good sport."

Stepanek, a journalism major from Oshkosh, will serve as the graduating class speaker at the 9 a.m. ceremony for the College of Letters and Science and the Center for New Learning. Her comments will emphasize that graduation is only one of many victories in graduates' lives and that learning continues even after they receive their diploma.

"I want them to know that this is not 'as good as its ever going to get,'" she said. "By continuing to learn, their lives will only get better."

Stepanek was a part of UWO's Bateman Team for the Public Relations Student Society of America, which recently won an honorable mention at the national level for their campaign for the U.S. Census.

**Abby Schultz**, an accounting and finance major from Reedsville, Wis., was chosen to speak at the 2 p.m. ceremony for the College of Business, College of Education and Human Services, and College of Nursing.

Her theme will be graduation as a moment in time that will launch graduates into future excellence.

Schultz has accepted a position as a staff accountant with Baker Tilly Virchow Krause in Appleton. She was offered the position after having an internship with the company during the 2010 tax season. It was her fourth internship.

She recommends that graduates stay persistent and flexible when searching for a job in the current economy.

"Companies have to make compromises to keep things going, and you need to let them know you are willing to work through this with them to achieve the best outcome," Schultz said.

Stepanek also has a job lined up after graduation. She will serve as a public relations and social media coordinator with Weidert Group Inc., a marketing agency in Appleton. Stepanek credits her strong work ethic for helping her get the job.

“Knowing the economy was pretty unforgiving, I treated every day of work as an interview,” she said. “I offered to do things outside of work, and did everything I could to make sure I was a valuable team member.”

She encourages graduates to take any opportunity that arises.

“Take on every challenge as if it could eventually lead to a job,” Stepanek said. “You never know who you will meet. Life can change in a matter of seconds, so don’t linger in negativity.”

Both speakers also were selected for “Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges” in recognition of campus leadership, academic excellence and community achievements.

For more information on UW Oshkosh’s commencement ceremonies, visit [www.uwosh.edu/commencement](http://www.uwosh.edu/commencement).

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