

Midyear Commencement 2013: More than 1,000 become UW Oshkosh alumni

by Mandy Potts - Saturday, December 14, 2013

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/30830/midyear-commencement-2013-more-than-1000-become-uw-oshkosh-alumni/>

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students hail from places around the state, the country and the world.

They come with diverse backgrounds and circumstances, differing career aspirations and majors, but, as graduates, all leave the same: As UW Oshkosh alumni and lifelong Titans.

On Dec. 14, more than 1,000--now, officially, alumni of the state's third-largest public institution--received their degrees. More than 900 undergraduates and more than 135 graduate students were recognized at the ceremony held at Kolf Sports Center, a tradition that, twice a year, draws thousands of families and friends to UW Oshkosh.

"This, today, makes me proud," said Tawny Hornes, of Neenah, who graduated with a degree in nursing. "UW Oshkosh is one of the best nursing schools out there and people will look highly at us."

Like most, Hornes felt many emotions leading up to the commencement ceremony. She was nervous, excited and optimistic for the future. Like Hornes, nursing graduate Brooke Harding, also of Neenah, said she's also very proud to be a UW Oshkosh alumna.

"Oshkosh has the best nursing school in the state, and I'm just so proud of my degree from here," she said.

Many other graduates, like Christopher Skogen, of Rosendale, are proud to add UW Oshkosh to their list of life experiences.

"I'm definitely going to miss UW Oshkosh," Skogen said. "These are some of the easiest and best times of my life. Sure the classes were tough, but this was all so enjoyable."

Skogen said his experiences at UW Oshkosh would have been nothing without the people he was surrounded by. He said he's thankful for his time at the University and will take the memories and lessons with him into both the world and his future classroom, as his degree is in secondary education.

Gary Martine will also not soon forget the people he was surrounded by as he earned his UW Oshkosh degree. Martine was among the graduates from [Wind River Tribal College](#) in Wyoming who earned a degree in elementary education through a UW Oshkosh collaboration fueled by the Department of Education and Office of Indian Education grants. He and 13 others earned degrees while attending Wind River.

"This isn't the end of a road for me; this is actually the beginning," Martine said. "I think it's really cool to be a part of this, to be a part of UW Oshkosh. It was a really good program and we appreciate being here

at UW Oshkosh today to graduate. We love Oshkosh."

While some graduates come from destinations far from Wisconsin to complete their degrees, Nhia Xiong didn't have to travel far for a top-knotch education. Xiong is an Oshkosh native who majored in human services. She said she values being from Oshkosh and now holding a UW Oshkosh degree. She hopes to represent her city and her alma mater well as she begins her career.

"Plus, I'm a first-generation graduate from a four-year school, and that's also a pretty big deal," Xiong said.

See our video capturing the moments of Midyear Commencement 2013...

Christine Gantner, UW Oshkosh alumni director, said commencement day is always a proud one for her. More than 82,000 UW Oshkosh Titans alumni live, work and play in various communities, states and countries around the world and she's always excited to welcome more people into the alumni family.

"My hope is they take all the positive and valuable experiences, memories made, knowledge earned and the friendships and take that positive momentum and apply it to their careers, communities and futures," Gantner said.

Midyear Ceremony

Before the traditional crossing of the stage at the 49th midyear commencement ceremony, commencement speakers took the podium offering the soon-to-be graduates good advice and inspirational words.

Student class speaker [Ashley Sinks](#), who majored in communication and journalism, confidently took the stage and encouraged her peers as they all head out on the next step of their journey.

"As we move forward, we will be forced to extend our boundaries and once again define who we are. There will be new cities and new expectations. Every day will hold new twists and turns. We are in charge of making the moves," she said. "Work hard, push through, and let's continue to chase our dreams....If we want to go places we have never been, we need to make moves we have never tried before. You will find your place in the world just as you did here at UW Oshkosh."

Outgoing [UW System President Kevin Reilly](#) was honored to take the place of faculty speaker at the ceremony; as he spoke to the graduates he offered them well-wishes and congratulations. Reilly spent nine years with the UW System and leaves to advise the American Council on Education come January.

"Graduates, that is my wish for you – that your UW Oshkosh education helps you find a balance and perspective in your life that is uniquely yours, despite the almost identical caps and gowns," Reilly said. "May you continue to tackle every exciting opportunity ahead of you with daring, confidence, and dedication..."

Reilly was also honored with a Chancellor's Medallion, which was presented by UW Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells, for his commitment to higher education and UW Oshkosh during his time with the UW System, which includes two doctoral universities, 11 comprehensive universities, 13 freshman-sophomore UW Colleges, and the statewide outreach networks of UW-Extension.

"UW Oshkosh is proud to honor President Reilly, a caring committed ally to Wisconsin's third-largest institution," Wells said.

State Representative Michael Schraa and Chad Landes of the UW System Board of Regents also participated in the commencement ceremony Dec. 14 and wished the UW Oshkosh graduates well.

Wells, along with Provost Lane Earns and on behalf of UW Oshkosh, awarded two [honorary doctorates](#) at the ceremony to Ahmed Khalfan Mohammad Salim Al-Rawahi and Abdulaziz Yahya Ahmed Sulieman AlKindi, both of the University of Nizwa, a University that UW Oshkosh has long partnered with.

The more than 1,000 students who graduated Dec. 14 brings the total number of 2013 graduates to an annual all-time high, at more than 2,200.

Read more:

- [Class speaker to Class of 2013: "You will find your place in the world just as you did at UW Oshkosh"](#)
- [Commencement speaker President Reilly: "The future really does lie in your hands"](#)