

More than 1,000 students receive degrees Dec. 15

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/265/more-than-1000-students-receive-degrees-dec-15/>

In spite of cold temperatures and the promise of snow, the mood was warm as more than 1,000 graduate and undergraduate students received degrees at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's 43rd Midyear Commencement ceremony Saturday, Dec. 15.

Friends and family of students from the University's four colleges — College of Business, College of Education and Human Services, College of Letters and Science, and College of Nursing — as well as the Office of Graduate Studies gathered to lend their support and express their pride in those who had reached this academic milestone.

Prior to the conferring of degrees, the Chancellor's Medallions were awarded to three northeastern Wisconsin community leaders — New North founders Robert J. DeKoch and Kathi P. Seifert as well as David L. Omachinski, '74, secretary/treasurer of the UW Oshkosh Foundation, executive management consultant of OshKosh B'Gosh and community volunteer.

Chancellor Richard H. Wells conferred diplomas to the graduating students at 9:30 a.m. at Kolf Sports Center, 785 High Ave. State Representative Gordon Hintz and State Senator Carol Roessler also participated in the ceremony, which was followed by a reception for faculty, new alumni, and their parents and guests in the center's lower level.

"This ceremony marks the end of (your) studies and the start of the pursuit of goals and dreams that follow," Roessler told the graduating class.

Of the more than 1,000 students who graduated, eight had returned to UW Oshkosh as part of the Graduation Project, a program for students whose progress at the University was interrupted for more than one semester, prior to them completing a degree.

"I always counted on finishing, but when you get older, life gets in the way," said Brenda Hallman, 47, who will receive a Bachelor of Accounting degree at the midyear ceremony. "There were people at the Graduation Project who worked with me to see what I needed to do to finish those credits, and then they connected me with an adviser, who helped me to get into that class that I needed."

Hallman, of Berlin, currently works with grant support in the University's Administrative Services office. She said she always intended to go back to finish her education.

"There's hardly anybody left that will hire you without a degree," said Hallman, who is excited and relieved to achieve this educational milestone.

Carla Roberts, also a nontraditional student, served as the graduating class speaker. In her address, she spoke of the challenges she faced and the sacrifices she made as a single mother going back to school to

get a degree.

“When I came to UWO two years ago as a nontraditional student, life for me was at its most turbulent, terrifying and tense,” Roberts said, adding that she would not have succeeded without financial support of scholarship donors as well as the support of her loved ones.

"I reached a goal 20 years in the making, and I will accept my diploma today, but I didn't want to wait another 20 years to fulfill that promise to be on the giving side of the table. I am announcing today that the Carla Roberts Special Education Scholarship will be available for application in this fall's scholarship catalog," she said.

Traci Raether, president of the UW Oshkosh Alumni Association concluded the ceremony by welcoming the new graduates to the ranks of more than 71,000 alumni who have preceded them.