

Take five: spotlight on graduating seniors

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/1953/take-five-snapshots-of-graduating-seniors/>

Following four years of record-breaking graduating classes, the largest group of University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students yet will receive their degrees May 16.

Five exceptional graduates share their commencement stories:

CON graduates 5,000th nurse

Forty years after the first College of Nursing graduates crossed the stage, the program will graduate its 5,000th nurse — Megan Propson. As the second largest producer of baccalaureate-prepared nurses in Wisconsin, UW Oshkosh's College of Nursing offers students an education using cutting-edge technology, including Second Life and simulation manikins that can speak, give birth, breathe and die.

The 5,000th nurse graduate highlights UW Oshkosh's impact on the regional economy and showcases one of the few professions expected to grow over the next decade.

- [Read more about how nursing education has changed in 40 years](#)

International student inspires family

Typically, the women in Damaris Membreno's hometown of La Lima, Honduras, do not have the opportunity to pursue higher education, especially in the U.S. The supply chain and operations management major counts herself lucky to have been able to learn in an environment where she could network with faculty, staff and students from many different cultures.

The first member of her family to earn a degree, Membreno hopes to be a role model for her siblings and cousins. Her parents, Rolando Membreno and Teresa Casco, will attend the graduation ceremony.

Graduating soldier highlighted in 'War' project

Fond du Lac's Nate Wilhelms, who will graduate during the 9 a.m. ceremony with a major in history, wanted to "be part of something bigger." He signed up for the Wisconsin Army National Guard in 2002; in August 2005, Wilhelms' unit, Charlie Company 2nd 127th Light Infantry Separate Infantry Battalion, deployed to Safwan, Iraq. A little more than a month after arriving in Iraq, Wilhelms learned firsthand the vagaries of war when a friend was killed in the line of duty.

Wilhelms's story is one of 16 told in "War Through Their Eyes," a multimedia project showcasing the stories of soldiers and Marines. The project, created by journalism students at UW Oshkosh, gave voice to students and alumni who have served in Iraq or are waiting for deployment. "War Through Their Eyes," which includes a full-color book, a series of podcasts and a photo gallery, will be unveiled at 5:30

p.m. May 15 at the Steinhilber Gallery in Reeve Memorial Union.

- [Read more about 'War: Through Their Eyes'](#)

A degree 20 years in the making

When Jane Preder graduates May 16, it will be the fulfillment of a 20-year goal. Preder began her UW Oshkosh courses as a means for personal enrichment when her children went to college. She worked on her degree by taking one class at a time for 20 years. However, although she'd earned more than 100 credits, Preder was losing motivation to finish.

Because she hadn't planned on changing careers and was hoping to retire in a few years, she wondered if she even needed a degree. A talk with someone from the UW Oshkosh Graduation Project gave her the boost she needed to re-enter and complete her program. Four semesters later, Jane will walk with her class in Spring Commencement 2009.

Grad student learned lessons inside, outside classroom

While Deborah Wetzel values her one-on-one interaction with UW Oshkosh faculty and staff inside the classroom, she is thankful for the opportunities that took her outside the classroom and taught her how to collaborate and be productive in the real world. She will graduate with honors with a master's degree in mental health counseling.

Wetzel, originally of San Fernando, Trinidad, will work toward a substance abuse and counseling certificate at Fox Valley Technical College in the fall and plans to pursue a Ph.D. in counseling psychology. In the meantime, she was hired by St. Norbert College, where she interned as a student. Her goal is to own a private practice.

More commencement stories:

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- [Brookfield native chosen as class speaker](#)
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