



News release

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**Gateway grads are exactly
what America needs now, says keynote speaker**

Tuesday's commencement keynote speaker Wes Saber told Gateway Technical College graduates that America right now needs workers with the skills they've gained through their college degrees.

"What does America need right now?" Saber asked the audience of graduates, family and friends. "It needs skilled hands and open minds. It needs electricians, EMTs, nurses, developers, dental hygienists, logistics leaders and small business builders.

"It needs people who know how to do the work and do it with integrity. It needs you. Gateway graduates don't wait around for someone else to fix it, you've already proven that. And now the future is yours to build."

Saber on Tuesday spoke at the School of Business and Transportation and School of Manufacturing, Engineering and Information Technology ceremony, which was one of two to recognize an estimated total of 1,370 Gateway graduates from the Summer 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2025 and Summer 2025 who will complete their programs. About 507 graduates will participate in the two ceremonies.

The college will follow up with a second ceremony on Wednesday, May 21, for the School of Health, School of Liberal Arts and Sciences and School of Protective and Human Services.

Saber told the graduates that they've gained the skills and been positioned to shape the future.

"And Gateway didn't just prepare you for a job, it prepared you for leadership ... The world isn't looking for perfect people. It's looking for people who show up, solve problems and bring others with them," he said. "That's you."

Saber told graduates that finding their path is something that's constructed and not found.

"People will tell you to 'go find your purpose,' like it's hiding behind a vending machine or printed in a fortune cookie," he said. "But here's what I've learned: Purpose isn't found, it's built.

"It's built through small, consistent actions. It's built through doing hard work, through helping someone, through staying late, through doing what's right, even when no one's watching."

Saber serves as the executive vice president and chief financial officer of HARIBO in addition to being a HARIBO board member. He spearheaded the addition of the company's latest production site in Pleasant Prairie. Prior to HARIBO, Saber held leadership roles in 25 countries around the world. He earned his Masters in Business Administration from Northern Illinois University and has continued his education at Harvard Business School and the Center for Creative Leadership.

Student Responder Zachary Cruz (Racine) told the audience that earning a degree and the commencement ceremony should be viewed as a beginning and not an end.

“You made it this far and you can continue to persevere through any storm that comes your way,” he said. “It is our shared responsibility to inspire those around us to grow and to continue giving back to this amazing community that helped shape us. Let today’s success be just the beginning of what we carry forward.”

The college honored 2025 Gateway Technical College Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Marina Schwenk at the ceremony. Schwenk earned an IT-Software Developer degree at Gateway in 2014. She currently serves as a senior programmer/analyst/IBM i administrator at Innovative Software Solutions. Schwenk has been named an IBM Fresh Face, speaks internationally about information technology topics and serves as president for the Wisconsin Midrange Computer Professional Association. She also earned her bachelor’s degree in Computer Information Software Development from Bellevue University.

Archived videos of the ceremonies will be available in the next few days on Gateway’s website at www.gtc.edu/commencement-ceremonies.

Gateway Technical College’s mission is to deliver industry-focused education that is flexible, accessible and affordable for our diverse community. The college collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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