



News release

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Gateway grads' skills are what the country needs, says keynote speaker

Wednesday's commencement keynote speaker Wes Saber told Gateway Technical College graduates their skills, their drive and their career fields are exactly what the country needs now.

"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 Wednesday spoke at the School of Health, School of Liberal Arts & Sciences and the School of Protective and Human Services commencement ceremony, one of two this week to recognize an estimated total of 1,370 Gateway graduates from the Summer 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2025 and Summer 2025 semesters who will complete their programs. About 507 graduates will participate in the two ceremonies.

Gateway Technical College President and CEO Ritu Raju offered similar thoughts.

“You’re graduating from a college that values innovation, excellence and perseverance,” Raju told the audience. “Carry those values with you. Become the leaders who build bridges, the creators who think differently and the citizens who give back.”

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 master's degree in Business Administration from Northern Illinois University and has continued his education at Harvard Business School and the Center for Creative Leadership.

Student Responder Beatrix Christensen (Mount Pleasant) told fellow graduates that she overcame fear and anxiety to earn her degree and she believed other graduates have probably experienced the same thing.

"I accomplished things I never thought I could," said Christensen. "But I know I am not alone on this journey. Each of us has faced our challenges and, together, we've overcome them.

"We all should thank Gateway for playing an instrumental role in that growth and for providing us with the opportunity to stand here today as a testament to how far we've come."

Christensen earned her Liberal Arts-Associate of Arts (Transfer Pathway) degree.

The college honored 2025 Gateway Technical College Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Marina Schwenk at the ceremony. Schwenk earned an IT-Software Developer degree from 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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