



News release

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**Everything is connected –
but it all begins at Gateway, speaker says**
College sees a record number of students attend commencements

Commencement keynote speaker Roger Tadajewski gave Gateway Technical College graduates some insight into how everything is connected to everything else in life, how a casual conversation can change a career path for the better for years to come.

And, how the degree from a technical college sets you up for success throughout life when those conversations take place.

Tadajewski talked about the twists and turns of his career and education, which began many years ago at a technical college much like Gateway – but said those first lessons of college and the skills he learned there were the ones that propelled him later on.

“I give you this background because the foundational skills I learned early in my career are what provided me the gateway to continue to move forward,” said Tadajewski.

“Tonight, as you stand on this threshold, I know you might feel a little bit nervous, unsure of how your future fits in today’s economy. But what I want to tell you is this: These opportunities in front of you are real.”

Tadajewski spoke at the School of Business and Transportation and the School of Manufacturing, Engineering and Information Technology commencement ceremony, one of two this week to recognize an estimated total of 1,636 Gateway graduates from the Summer 2025, Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 semesters who will complete their programs. A record number of 604 graduates will participate in the two ceremonies.

Gateway Technical College Interim President and CEO Morgan Phillips congratulated the graduates, noting that their careers begin today – but that they may ultimately return to college to retool and reskill in the future. He gave credit to the specific group graduating on Tuesday night, noting that the graduates in the audience are those who “keep the world turning.”

“We have welders, pilots and diesel technicians. We have accountants, human resources specialists and marketing gurus. We have civil engineers, construction pros and IT experts. If the power grid flickered, the supply chain stalled and the building’s HVAC system decided to retire right now, I’m looking at the only group of people on Earth who could fix it before the recessional music starts,” said Phillips.

“You are here because you possess persistence. You just didn’t vibe your way into a degree – you showed up when the projects were grueling, the blueprints were confusing and the world was distracting.”

Tadajewski is the executive director of the National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3), an organization that focuses on educational and industry partnerships. His professional experience includes 14 years in metallurgical engineering research and development in the energy and aerospace industries. From there, he went on to develop the most comprehensive automotive educational youth program in America -

Automotive Youth Educations Systems (AYES). He earned a bachelor's degree in Business from the Pepperdine Graziadio Business School, and continued to earn credentials through Rockwell International in overall strategic planning and capital finance planning.

Student Responder Jeremy Butler told the audience that while the commencement ceremony might seem like the end of a journey, he asked students to think of it as a beginning. It's a time when graduates can help others and give back to those around them.

"Gateway has invested in us, now we have the chance to invest in others," said Butler. "And while today marks the end of one chapter, it is absolutely the beginning of another.

"The world we're stepping into is changing fast — industries evolve, technology advances and new opportunities appear every day. But the mindset we built here — the willingness to learn, adapt and grow — will carry us forward. Let this degree be a foundation."

Butler earned an associate degree in Business Management.

The college honored 2026 Gateway Technical College Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Veronica King. She is a Human Services instructor at Waukesha County Technical College, where she prepares students for careers in helping professions. She is also licensed in Wisconsin as a social worker, clinical substance abuse counselor and independent clinical supervisor.

King's nominator says she "has been a longtime community leader in Kenosha and continues to give of her time and talents to boards and organizations ... and is not

afraid to speak at county board meetings and city council meetings to make elected officials aware of the struggles citizens in our community are facing.”

King earned a Gateway Technical College Associate of Science degree in Supervisory Management in 2001, as well as returning to the college in 2011 when she earned an Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse certificate.

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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