



News release

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Contact: Lee Colony 262.564.2512

262.359.0798 (cell)

**Keynote: Your Gateway degree
is now part of your life's story**

Gateway Technical College Welding/Maintenance & Fabrication technical diploma graduate Peter Faz said he wanted to attend the college's commencement ceremony Tuesday night because he was proud of earning his diploma and wanted to mark the occasion by attending and being recognized with his fellow graduates.

"I really did earn it and felt I should come — this is something I should attend," said Faz.

Faz wasn't alone in his thoughts, as many graduates who took part in the School of Business and Transportation and the School of Manufacturing, Engineering and Information Technology commencement ceremony Tuesday, May 16, said they felt the same.

The ceremony was one of two to recognize an estimated 1,300 total Gateway graduates from the Summer 2022, Fall 2022, Spring 2023 and Summer 2023 who will complete their program. About 450 graduates will participate in the two ceremonies.

The college will follow up with a second ceremony on Wednesday, May 17, to honor graduates of the School of Health, School of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the School of Protective and Human Services.

Faz will earn a college credential at the same time he earned his East Troy High School diploma. He chose welding because of the industry's solid salary and says he's glad he's earned the diploma at such a young age.

"It's nice, because I'm already set, I have the education to go out right now and look for a job," he said. "I don't have to worry about going to college after high school. I've already done that."

Tuesday's commencement keynote speaker Lindsay Blumer told graduates the path they took to get to Gateway, or the length of time it took after high school to enroll at the college, didn't matter as much as that final decision they made to gain a college degree.

"What matters today is you found your way here," said Blumer. "Here at Gateway, where the path to this place was honored but never judged, where your path here is part of your story and now your story includes graduating.

"That may be graduating as a diesel equipment technician or an office assistant or a CNC programmer or an IT software developer or an accountant or maybe, just maybe, a welder. But now your story continues in an amazing and important way."

Blumer currently serves as the president and CEO of the Milwaukee-based WRTP/BIG STEP, a workforce intermediary connecting traditionally disenfranchised people to quality career opportunities.

Student Responder and Elkhorn Campus Ambassador Thomas Routt Jr. told the audience that a cousin encouraged him to attend Gateway and pointed to college instructors who also encouraged him to reach his goal of earning a college diploma. He told graduates to remember how they overcame any obstacles in their way to earn their degree and use that same grit and determination in their future.

“You might be a single parent, a student working part-time or full-time while taking classes, maybe you took care of a parent while attending classes or are the first from your family to attend college,” said Routt, who earned a CNC Programmer technical diploma and a CNC Production Technician technical diploma.

“If you are like me, maybe you are on disability and trying to get back into the workforce. Well, the sleepless nights you put in to complete your homework paid off big time. You took the chance of bettering your life no matter how hard it was or how many obstacles popped up along the way. Fellow graduates, we are tougher, and better off, for following and achieving our Gateway dreams.”

The college honored 2023 Gateway Technical College Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Debra Hain at the ceremony. Hain earned her Gateway Practical Nursing technical diploma in 1980 and her Nursing associate degree in 1985. She went on to earn her doctor of Nursing Science degree, a PhD in Nursing and, in 2022, a postgraduate degree as a psychiatric nurse practitioner. In total, she’s earned eight degrees. She serves as a tenured professor, doctor of

Nursing Practice program and graduate co-coordinator for the Adult/Gerontological Nurse Practitioner program at Florida Atlantic University.

Other commencement notes:

- The first two SC Johnson STEM Scholars Pathway program graduates received their degrees this week. Keng Xiong earned an Information Technology-Cybersecurity Specialist degree and Noah Hernandez earned an Electrical Engineering Technology degree.
- Of the 127 Welding/Maintenance & Fabrication technical diploma graduates on Tuesday, 58 were high school students who earned the diploma through High School Academies offered by Gateway at its Elkhorn Campus, Racine Campus and Waterford Union High School. These students earned college diplomas before earning their high school diplomas.
- The archived 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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