

UW-Green Bay: Celebrates its graduates

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Green Bay, Wis. — Aaron Splan from Pulaski, Wis. is one of six students who will graduate this semester with a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering—the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay's first graduates from that program since it was offered beginning in Fall of 2018.

For Splan, like many of his engineering classmates and nearly 500 graduating UW-Green Bay peers, adjusting to hybrid and online classes was difficult. But he... and they... persisted.

“Online learning during the pandemic was a difficult change for me personally,” Splan said. “I learn best in a live classroom situation. Unfortunately, meeting in person was not possible due to COVID-19, and a transition to online learning was absolutely necessary. The sudden transition was hard for everyone. However, I was extremely encouraged by the University's quick response and I felt like they did everything they could have done to serve their students in light of the situation.

“Due to online learning, my engineering laboratory experience was curtailed,” Splan said. “This is unfortunate as I and my colleagues were looking forward to using the brand-new facilities and lab equipment (at the Brown County STEM Innovation Center) on campus. The professors did as much as they could to bring that experience online such as recording labs for us to observe and providing real data to use in our lab reports. Luckily, I was able to use the new labs for one course as the professor was able to safely conduct them in accordance with COVID-19 safety guidelines.”

Splan was also able to get practical experience as an intern at PCMC (Paper Converting Machine Company), Green Bay.

“PCMC was an extremely formative experience for me and complimented my engineering schooling perfectly,” Splan said. “Working there kept me motivated to finish my degree as I truly enjoyed the work I was doing. I always felt like an important member of the team and was given meaningful work that helped the company succeed. I believe that participating in an internship experience in your field of study is one of the most important things students can do to get the most out of their educational experience.”

Splan started a full-time mechanical engineer position at Retroflex Inc. in Wrightstown at the end of August.

“Due to my previous internship at PCMC and education at UWGB, I was able to hit the ground running and immediately start taking on projects typically reserved for more experienced engineers,” he added.

Splan also graduated debt free.

This Year’s Graduating Class:

This semester, 494 students have applied to graduate from the University. Because of the pandemic, UW-Green Bay will not have a formal commencement ceremony this fall/winter, and instead, is inviting all fall/winter graduates to participate in Spring 2021 Commencement. If not for COVID-19, this would have been the first time that graduates from all four UW-Green Bay campuses (Green Bay (462 graduates), Marinette (7), Manitowoc (11) and Sheboygan (14) would have gathered together for commencement ceremonies. They will join the 40,492 students who have graduated from UW-Green Bay since the first ceremony in June of 1970. The Spring Commencement will be the University’s 102nd.

“We are extremely proud of the members of entire four-campus community,” said Chancellor Mike Alexander. “Our faculty worked incredibly hard to prepare for the unconventionality of teaching during the pandemic, and our students faced challenges not seen by previous generations, yet persisted to degree completion. I have great admiration for this class of students.”

About the Class Speaker:

Georgie “Dolly” Potts was nominated and selected as the class speaker. Her address to her graduating peers will be released virtually on Saturday, Dec. 19 (what was meant to be the date of commencement) on the University’s homepage, www.uwgb.edu. Potts, who will be graduating with a First Nations

Studies degree is a member of Prairie Band Potawatomi from Kansas. Nominators said her achievements transcend academics. Her speech will be a story passed through her family for generations.

“We believe in the seven generations. I am in the middle. I learn and listen to my ancestors from the past three generations and I look to the future three generations,” Potts explains. “These stories come from my ancestors. We pass them down to our children, to our grandchildren.” She recognizes this is a concept that doesn’t always fit neatly in a Western worldview. But she adds, “If you talk of the seven generations to a native, they know exactly what you’re talking about.”

In just two years, after transferring from College of Menominee Nation, Pott’s stature among students, faculty and the First Nations community on campus has grown through her words of encouragement, empathetic listening and a unique life perspective influenced by Potawatomi traditions.

See [Potts’ biography](#).

Noteworthy:

The Mayor’s Office of the City of Green Bay will honor UW-Green Bay graduates on Saturday, Dec. 19, 2020 by lighting the Ray Nitschke Bridget and the Walnut Street Bridge in school colors.