

UW-Green Bay: Bringing Pomp to Circumstance, Celebrates its Grads on May 15

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Green Bay, Wis.—This year, where there's pomp, there's also circumstance as universities look to bring some normalcy to the time-honored tradition of commencement. With the circumstance of the worldwide pandemic trending in a positive and safe direction in Wisconsin, universities like UW-Green Bay will honor the hard work and tenacity of their students over the last year in unconventional, yet memorable, ways.

More than 650 UW-Green Bay students and their families will transcend on the campus on Saturday, May 15, 2021 over an extended 12-hour timeframe. Graduates (from Fall/Winter 2020 and Spring/Summer 2021) and their families have pre-registered for time slots, where they will [follow a special route through campus](#) that includes a UW-Green Bay faculty, staff and alumni cheering section; hear the Class of 2021 playlist; be publicly introduced on stage by name, degree and honors; receive their diploma and share an elbow bump with Chancellor Michael Alexander.

"This will set a record as the longest commencement in UW-Green Bay history," noted Chancellor Michael Alexander. "But based on the [reaction to the modified celebration we held last year](#), it will also be one of the most memorable and most personal for our graduates and their families. And that makes Saturday a day we're all really looking forward to. After the last year, we're ready to celebrate."

This is the University's 103rd Commencement Ceremony since its first in June of 1970. Graduates from all four UW-Green Bay Campuses (Green Bay, Marinette, Manitowoc and Sheboygan) are participating. In Fall/Winter 2020, 483 students were eligible to graduate, and in Spring/Summer 2021, 1,134 students are eligible (1,617 total).

"We are excited, that in the midst of a pandemic, we can continue to celebrate the many accomplishments of our graduating students," said Vice Chancellor (University Inclusivity and Student Affairs) Corey King. "Keeping safety as our priority, this outdoor commencement is our version of 'pomp redefined' and allows families and friends to join us in marking a milestone in the lives of our graduates."

Student Commencement Speaker Abby Tower Forges Her Path

The Spring 2021 Commencement Speaker is Abby Tower. Her speech will be released at www.uwgb.edu on Commencement Day, May 15. The La Crosse, Wis. native forged her own path in her own way, despite admittedly being "lost" her freshman year. "I really didn't know what to expect coming into college, to be completely honest," she says. "I wanted a fresh start. UWGB gave me the opportunity to be my own person and discover what I was passionate about without the weight of expectations of my peers from my hometown."

Tower is graduating with a double major in Political Science and Democracy and Justice Studies with an emphasis in the U.S. and the World, plus a triple minor in Spanish and Latin American Studies, Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL Certificate) and World Cultures. She has completed her degree in four years and with a perfect 4.0 GPA. [See more about Tower.](#)

Special Recognition for Graduating Indigenous Students

Indigenous students participating in the 2021 Spring Commencement Celebration will wear custom-made stoles. The stoles are made by Rezcreations, owned and operated by Carrie Chapman-Peters (a member of the Menominee tribe) and headquartered on the Menominee Nation's land. Chapman-Peters made the stoles from a Pendleton blanket donated by Crystal Lepscier, UW-Green Bay's First Nations student success coordinator. The blanket was once part of the inventory at the Konkapot Lodge, a former hotel owned and operated by her Stockbridge-Munsee mother's family. This blanket, like many historical Pendleton blankets, holds meaning because it marks an honor and a story. The stoles will be edged with bias tape to enhance the colors on the blanket design, which are shades of green (UW-Green Bay's school color) and brown. UW-Green Bay has approximately 212 self-identified Indigenous students in undergraduate and graduate programs, 26 of whom will be graduating.

UW-Green Bay's culture of caring carried Frances Nazario in journey to become an educator

The journey to a bachelor's degree was long but fulfilling for Frances Nazario, who will graduate from UW-Green Bay on Saturday, May 15, 2021. Born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, but raised in Wisconsin, Nazario says she "feels blessed and fortunate to be bicultural. I am proud to be Puerto Rican and proud to be a Wisconsinite." Her culture has also given her keen insight to the education system and those who struggle because of language or cultural barriers. For Nazario, an education major, that means rising up so that those she teaches will do the same.

"I love teaching," she says. "My experience at current placement (Edison Middle School) in Green Bay, Wis. reaffirms it daily. The students I serve are wonderful, my host teachers have been so supportive, patient, and wonderful educators on this last semester."

At one point, the mother of two was trying to negotiate school and a newborn. Nazario says she couldn't have done it without incredible support from UW-Green Bay faculty and staff who went beyond the call to support her journey.

[Read her story, here.](#)

Message to Media Planning to Cover Event.

Members of the media are welcome to attend UW-Green Bay's Spring Commencement 2021 Celebration from 8 a.m. to completion, Saturday, May 15. Please DO NOT try to enter campus via the Main Entrance. Graduates and families will be processing in their cars from the Main Entrance off Nicolet Drive to the Weidner Center Valet Parking and public entrance to the Phoenix Statue in front of the Cofrin Library, where they can be interviewed by media. B-roll along the route is appropriate. For traffic control and convenience, **members of the media should enter campus through the Scottwood Drive Entrance off of Nicolet Drive and proceed to the backside of the Weidner Center for parking.** Please RSVP to Sue Bodilly, bodillys@uwgb.edu an approximate time you will attend the ceremonies. **Do not hold up traffic for interviews. Interviews should be conducted following photos at the Phoenix Statue in front of the Cofrin Library.**

[Link to Map](#)