

# UW-Eau Claire: Alumna urges UW-Eau Claire graduates to work for change in the world

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Blugold alumna Camila Mennitte Pereyra told University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire graduates on Saturday that they have a responsibility to use the “great power” of their new college degrees to help improve the lives of others.

Mennitte Pereyra delivered the “Charge to the Class” at the two commencement ceremonies, thanking those who helped her persevere when she moved from Argentina to Wisconsin to pursue her dreams of higher education.

“Some people think that in order to effect change you have to be a politician or an activist,” Mennitte Pereyra says. “But the truth is, we can all effect change. The people who helped me effected a tremendous amount of change. In helping me, my mentors, teachers, friends and family ensured that a young Hispanic woman made it in a mostly white-male-dominated field. They ensured that a Hispanic woman became a part of the academic lineage at UW-Eau Claire.”

A total of 677 students received their degrees during the commencement exercises at Zorn Arena; 627 students received bachelor’s degrees and 50 received graduate degrees.

Mennitte Pereyra, a freelance drummer and composer based in Chicago, came to the U.S. from Argentina and earned a bachelor’s degree in music in 2018. She admitted that adjusting to life in the U.S. was at times difficult, but with the help of many at UW-Eau Claire and in the community, earned her bachelor’s degree.

Just as she was assisted during her time at UW-Eau Claire, graduates have a

collective responsibility to “pay it forward” to uplift those around us, Mennitte Pereyra says.

“Let me be clear,” Mennitte Pereyra says. “The people who helped me had no obligation whatsoever to do so, yet they did it anyway, even at times of inconvenience for them. As a result, here I stand today.”

Mennitte Pereyra is one of the UW-Eau Claire Alumni Association’s 2022 Outstanding Recent Alumnus Award winners honored at the ceremonies. Others are Dr. Katie (Van De Hey) Landgraf, Outstanding Recent Alumnus Award; Dale Peters, Lifetime Excellence Award; Paul Smith, Alumni Distinguished Achievement Award; and Dean Kallenbach, Honorary Alumnus Award.

In his message to graduates, Chancellor James Schmidt told graduates that he is confident they will find success and happiness in their future endeavors.

“I know that great success is in store for you, as are new challenges,” Schmidt says. “But success and satisfaction are not measured by how easy the path is — they’re measured in lives changed and lasting impacts created.”

As they join the ranks of Blugold alumni, Schmidt says, graduates will become part of a group that is united by wisdom, insight and compassion they share with those around them.

“Blugolds, your degree is a passport — one that identifies you as a citizen of the world, individuals who have grappled with the ever-evolving body of human knowledge,” Schmidt says. “It is a sign that you are ready to encounter any situation with critical insight and intelligence.”