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WKU marks milestone with graduand ceremony

TREY CRUMBIE The News-Enterprise 4 hrs ago



Loretta Sonsolla speaks to soon-to-be Western Kentucky University graduates Wednesday night at the Hardin County Performing Arts Center. WKU held a ceremony for those attending the Elizabethtown-Fort Knox branch. About 40 of the eligible spring 2019 graduates were recognized.

Wearing black graduation gowns and caps, several Western Kentucky University students who attend the Elizabethtown-Fort Knox branch filed into the seats Wednesday night to celebrate their years of scholarly work as part of a spring graduand ceremony.

About 40 of the 150 eligible spring 2019 graduates were recognized at the Hardin County Schools Performing Arts Center at John Hardin High School.

Degrees earned included bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees in systems management, computer information technology, social work, nursing and more. Delivering the student address was Loretta Sonsalla, who was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in criminology. Sonsalla reflected on the work she and her fellow graduates did to obtain their degrees.

“The hours spent in the library, in our classrooms, reading while grabbing lunch at our full-time jobs, time spent on group projects, submitting discussion board entries, researching for those final papers and, last but not least, studying for the final exam, it has all paid off,” she said.

Sonsalla wished her fellow graduates good luck in the future.

“After today, some of you will go on to new jobs,” she said. “Some of you will remain with your current jobs and hopefully get a promotion. And some of you may apply to even higher learning, such as grad school or law school. But wherever you go from here, I encourage you – continue to learn. Let everyday be your classroom.”

Another student who attended the ceremony was Dmarc Gray. Originally from Detroit, Gray moved to Elizabethtown in 2012 following the decline of Michigan's automotive industry.

“My brother ended up coming down here with Ford Motor Co. I followed him and then I decided to start school,” he said.

Gray earned a Bachelor of Science degree in computer information technology. He chose the major because of his passion for computers.

“I always loved to work on computers, and so I decided to better myself and up my credentials by getting a degree,” he said. “I figured it would help diversify me.”

Gray, who works at CompuCom Systems Inc. in Louisville, said he plans to stay in his career field.

“I’m already working in (information technology),” he said. “I plan on looking for, I don’t want to say a better job, but something that’s more lucrative and something that can help me gain more experience in what I’ve been studying for the last six years or so.”

Gray said he was happy he finished his degree, despite his calm demeanor.

“I don’t look excited, but everything inside of me is like ‘Aaaaaah,’” he said. “I’m excited about getting my life back.”

Gray was accompanied by his girlfriend, Staci Aubrey, and their daughter, Kesi Aubrey, 8. Kesi shared her father’s feelings on getting his degree.

“(I feel) happy and excited,” she said.

A graduand ceremony is a pregraduation ceremony. WKU will hold its commencement ceremonies today and Saturday on its main campus in Bowling Green.

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