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TOP STORY

Caboni to grads: Carry WKU spirit with you

By JACKSON FRENCH jfrench@bgdailynews.com Dec 9, 2017 Updated Dec 9, 2017



Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni (left) greets Kristin Stockdale Saturday, December 9, 2017, during WKU's 182nd commencement at E.A. Diddle Arena. (Bac Totrong/photo@bgdailynews.com)

Bac Totrong/Daily News

In his first commencement address, Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni urged graduates Saturday to keep the school's spirit with them as they embark on the next stage of their lives.

During WKU's 182nd commencement ceremony at E.A. Diddle Arena, Caboni commended WKU for adhering to the philosophies of its first president, Henry Hardin Cherry.

"Through the years, our mission has expanded, as has our physical campus, yet we remain true to president Cherry's original vision to be a university of social mobility and of access and opportunity for all who want to live here and to grow," he said.

Caboni spoke to the importance of WKU's motto: "The Spirit Makes the Master."

"That phrase may have a different meaning to different people," he said. "For me, it speaks to our resolve as an institution to prepare you to make a good living but even more important, it speaks to our commitment to prepare you to make a good life.

"Now as you step out into the world, I challenge you to carry with you that spirit that has defined your time here," he said.

Caboni urged students to embrace differences and not step away from challenges.

"Speak up. Engage. Make a difference," he said. "This is what Hilltoppers do."

Degrees and certificates were conferred to 1,401 graduates Saturday, according to information provided by WKU. Heather Hack was among the hundreds of graduates honored at the second of two ceremonies.

Hack earned a master's degree in library science, she said. Hack previously earned a bachelor's degree in education from WKU and worked as a third- and fourth-grade teacher in Hardin County Schools while working toward her master's, which she said was a challenge.

"A great weight has been lifted off my shoulders," she said.

Hack described the WKU curriculum as “a good mix of technology and literature,” adding that her coursework often involved ways to incorporate technology into the classroom.

With a master’s in library science, Hack is qualified to be a library media specialist at a school or public library. That creates options if she wants to take her career in a different direction, but Hack said she expects to keep teaching third and fourth grades for the time being.

“Right now, I enjoy what I’m doing,” she said.



Meanwhile, Lindsey Littlepage and her father, Jim Littlepage, graduated together. Jim Littlepage received a degree in interdisciplinary studies, though he plans to continue his current job as vice president of a finance company.

“It’s more of an open degree,” he said. “It doesn’t limit you to one direction.”

His degree will come into play when he retires, at which point he intends to start teaching either psychology or history at the high school level, he said.

“I’m more excited for her than I am for me,” he said. “I feel like I had to show her an example by finishing.”

Lindsey Littlepage, who earned a bachelor's in education, said graduating is a surreal experience and that she matured a great deal throughout her college journey.

“I grew up a lot,” she said. “I feel like I’m a different person than I was.”

Though the college experience brought numerous difficulties and occasionally self-doubt, Lindsey Littlepage said she’s determined to return to her home in Hendersonville, Tenn., to teach.

“There were a couple of times where I didn’t know if this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, but that was only because it was hard,” she said. “Now I can’t imagine myself doing anything else.”

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