

170th Commencement Ceremony

NDNU Graduates Rise to the Top During Time of Great Challenge

NDNU's 170th Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 7th, was an especially joyous event. On a windy but otherwise perfect morning, over 250 faculty, staff, family members, and friends gathered to celebrate the 99 students receiving credentials and master's degrees in the first in-person graduation ceremony in three years. Hurray!

"It is my great privilege to be standing before you today congratulating you on your amazing goals and for completing your degrees during a time of great stress and difficulty," said NDNU President Beth Martin in her opening remarks.

"Your education can never be taken from you; it can only enrich your lives," she continued. "While our world faces many problems, we are witnessing how the accumulation of knowledge over centuries contributes to solutions. You are now better equipped and prepared to change our world, and we all look forward to the changes you will make."

Other themes resonating throughout Commencement included striving for peace and justice, with President Martin conferring an honorary degree to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in support of the Ukrainian people. *Editor's Note: NDNU was one of the first universities to bestow such an honor.*

Additional highlights included the following:

Mario Rendon, Susan Charles, and John Astin were honored with this year's George M. Keller Teaching Excellence Award. Faculty members are nominated by the students in each school, and the award recipient is chosen by a selection committee including previous winners.

City of Belmont Mayor Julia Mates presented community service and leadership awards to three students – Charmaine Bridgens, Daniel Martin, and Maureen Anchondo - who "gave above and beyond in making our community a better place through their volunteerism."

This year's commencement speaker Patricia Camacho-Fuentes cited the ongoing support from fellow classmates, NDNU faculty and staff as instrumental to her successes, especially with COVID looming in the background. "The professors in the Clinical Psychology program trained me professionally ... and also encouraged me to be a better person, to be an active agent of change in my community, in my home and inside myself. Many things have changed over these three years, but our sense of community is still here, stronger than ever!"

Following the awarding of degrees and credentials, the NDNU community gathered for a lovely reception following the event.

Congratulations to our newest alumni!