



## **171st Commencement Ceremony** **Authenticity, Community and Hallmarks Are Front and Center On this Special Day**



NDNU's 171st Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 6th, was an especially inspirational event. On a slightly rainy, but otherwise perfect morning, nearly 400 faculty, staff, family members, and friends gathered to celebrate the 84 students receiving credentials and master's degrees.

"Today is a proud day for you and for Notre Dame de Namur University," said Sr. Jean Stoner, Chair, NDNU Board of Trustees. "For 172 years this university has educated women and men of excellence, integrity and service. Today, it is you, our newest

graduates, who make us proud. We trust that the core values we share - living with integrity, serving a diverse community with excellence, and working for peace and justice - will continue to motivate your actions and relationships."

"Today, we are all assembled to celebrate your achievements and wish you well as you pursue the careers in which you invested so much of yourselves, your time and talents, over the last few years," said NDNU President Beth Martin in her opening remarks.

She continued, "This is not the conclusion nor end of your learning, but the launch of all your future life-long pursuits. You are now better equipped and prepared to change our world – to change YOUR world. We all look forward to seeing the changes you will make as you go out into the world to make a difference."

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**Excerpts from 2023 Keynote Address, Adili Skillin, Class of '94**  
**Marking Transitions by Growing, Learning and Connecting**

"Transition, what does this word mean? Take a second. Think of yourself 10 years ago, no, think of yourself 5 years ago. Many transitions. Some transitions were good, some transitions were bad, but did you learn from them? That you are sitting here in front of me tells me that you did learn and that you made excellent decisions. Was it always perfect? No, but I would argue that the greatest learning derives from overcoming the challenges, and making difficult transitions.



It is also important to understand we never do things alone. By sharing your story and learning another, you have just made a new transition. You have just grown. This is what NDNU is about: growing, learning and transitioning. My grandmother learned that when she was here. My mother experienced that when she was here. My aunt instilled that when she was here. And, I was the beneficiary of all of that when I was here as well. So, I do have one last homework assignment for you. No, it wasn't in any of your syllabi. You too have benefited from being here. So, I ask you to go out into the world and share what you have learned. Make this world a better place for the rest of us to live in.

I am honored to be standing in front of you. This day, and this celebration, is a transition for you to move onto the next phase of your life. Many people will say you have been given the gift of education, and I believe that education is a great gift. But the truth of the matter is: You are the gift to this world. And for each heartbeat that you have, there can be a monumental transition for you to reshape the world."

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## [Excerpts from 2023 Student Commencement Speech, Yanyan Lu](#) **Journey from Tech to Marriage and Family Therapist**



"I am honored to speak to you today. NDNU has taught us so much, and I am eager to take these learnings into my professional life. Before we go, I would love to share some of the most valuable lessons from my time as a clinical psychology student with you.

The first lesson is to live an authentic life.

I have always been fascinated by the complexity of the human mind. About 23 years ago, when I first visited the library as a freshman computer science major, instead of grabbing a C++ book, I gravitated towards a book on Abnormal Psychology. Yes, before coming to NDNU, I was a software engineer at a tech company and a computer science student

before that. Despite my passion for psychology, I pursued something different due to my family's expectations; but I never felt fulfilled. So, I feel fortunate that I've had the opportunity at NDNU to study psychology and practice therapy, which has been my dream for a long time.

After switching careers, I reconnected with my authentic self. Your authentic self is already and always with you. Listening, respecting, and expressing it, however, is something that requires practice and commitment, especially if we have been doing what we're told – by our parents, friends, and society – for our whole lives. We must make living authentically a priority in our lives.

The second lesson is about building community."

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