

Saint Mary-of-the Woods celebrates 50 years of distance education

SMWC began offering remote learning in 1973

FOR THE TRIBUNE-STAR

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College is marking its 50th anniversary of providing distance education.

The Woods began offering remote learning in 1973 with the Women's External Degree program. Jeanne Knoerle, emerita president of SMWC, understood the need for a distance education program for women to complete their degree in a flexible learning environment.

The program was geared toward women who had started their path to higher education but had to stop because they had been married and started families or for other reasons that might have prevented them from finishing their education and getting their undergraduate degree, according to the college.

In 2005, the name was



SMWC photo

Brennan Randolph, interim president of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, on Monday discusses The Woods' 50th anniversary of providing distance education.

changed to Woods External Degree to reflect the admission of male students and in 2011, it was renamed Woods Online to better signify the delivery of the program to students.

Since 1973, more than 3,500 bachelor's degrees have been conferred, and over 1,800 certificates have been awarded.

October 9, 2023, was declared as Woods Online Day through a proclamation

issued by Terre Haute Mayor Duke Bennett.

Brennan J. Randolph, interim president, reflected on the 50-year milestone for WOL.

"Woods Online is the second oldest distance learning program in the nation. It exemplifies the innovation and ability to pivot that SMWC has shown throughout our 183 years," he said.

Woods Online offers options for three associ-



ate degrees, 21 bachelor's degrees, seven graduate degrees, three certificates and five licensures. There are also 17 minor choices that can be paired with degrees.

Sara Boyer, executive director of student success, said, "WED was all about personal relationships, so it was vital to carry that high-touch approach into the Wood Online platform. Our faculty continue to have the student-centered approach."

Randolph added, "Since 1973, Woods Online has become a nationally recognized online program with students and graduates worldwide."

Woods Online enrollment for 2023-24 is projected to be just over 400.

- This item was provided to the Tribune-Star by Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

