

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College celebrates 191st commencement

TRIBUNE-STAR STAFF REPORT

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College celebrated its 191st commencement Saturday and welcomed 367 graduates from the Class of 2025.

The morning ceremony honored campus graduates, while the afternoon ceremony celebrated Woods Online graduates and those earning graduate degrees.

This year marked a historic milestone as SMWC conferred its first-ever doctoral degrees and honored the first graduates of the Paramedic Science to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program.

President Brennan J. Randolph welcomed graduates, their families, and loved ones who gathered in Hamilton Arena at the Jeanne Knoerle Sports and Recreation Center.

"Today, we are celebrating the accomplishments of our students over two ceremonies, with nearly 250 graduates in attendance, and many additional ones watching at home through livestream," he said.

Commencement speakers for each ceremony were selected by a committee from nominations submitted by students, faculty, and staff. Nominees were required to have a GPA of 3.0 or higher, among other criteria.

Jonathan Hayden, a theology graduate from Linton, delivered an inspiring address during the morning ceremony.

"You must have faith in the journey forward, even when you question everything. But there is hope. You wouldn't be called forth if you didn't have the gifts you were given," Hayden said. "I mean, there is only one you. One story that only you can tell. It's yours. And in the grandness of this world, this infinite universe, your story matters."

He told the audience, "You may look back at yourself, years from now, and think, 'Wow, look how much I've been



Submitted photo

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College celebrated its 191st commencement Saturday and welcomed 367 graduates from the Class of 2025.

changed into someone completely new! And that's when you know – it was worth it."

In the afternoon ceremony, Eleni Miller, a master's in nursing graduate from Terre Haute, addressed the Woods Online and graduate degree recipients.

"We stand at the threshold of a new chapter of our lives. This institution and its people have equipped us with knowledge, tools, and values that allow us to make a difference," she said. "However, powerful tools and knowledge can be used both for good and ill. This is where the values Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College has instilled in us come in."

In her speech, Miller went on to say, "We emerge into a world hurting in many ways. Let us resolve to be buffers against the social injustices, alienation, and environmental depredations that roil our nation and planet. Stand for others. Act with purpose. Above all else, continue to be open to new ideas and to

growth in both virtue and knowledge."

The Alumni Leadership and Service Award, recognizing graduates who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and service during their time at SMWC, was presented to Deborah Murphy for the undergraduate award and Elizabeth Reel for the graduate award.

The prestigious Maud Helm Rockwell Medal for Academic Excellence was awarded to the top graduates of the campus-based and Woods Online programs with the highest cumulative GPA.

Campus recipients are Rachel Davis; Jordyn Dowd; Nina Englund; Lillie Gendel; Bailey Mittal; Madison White.

Woods Online recipients are Sarah Dye; Matthew Phipps; Kelly Russ; Antony Taylor; Lana Taylor.

Between the two ceremonies, the baccalaureate liturgy was held in the Church of Immaculate Conception, adding a spiritual dimension to the day's celebrations.