

# The Woods confers 350 degrees and certificates to Class of 2026

FOR THE TRIBUNE-STAR

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College conferred 350 degrees and certificates during two commencement ceremonies Saturday.

The college celebrated its 192nd commencement.

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

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

"Today we are celebrating the accomplishments of our students, whether in attendance or watching at home through livestream," Randolph said. "Regardless of where you and your loved ones are, we are excited to recognize your graduation and completion of this journey at The Woods."

A total of 122 students earned Latin honors. This includes 46 students graduating cum laude, 36 earning magna cum laude distinction and 40 achieving summa cum laude.

In addition, 27 degree recipients were recognized at the associate and graduate levels, including two associate degree graduates and 25 graduate students who earned honors.

Commencement speakers for each ceremony were graduating students. Elizabeth Wetzel of Avon, a triple-major in pre-art therapy, psychology and art, delivered the address at the morning ceremony.

Paige Chickadaunce, of Sullivan, who majored in psychology and was also a recipient of the Maud Helm Rockwell Medal for Academic Excellence award, looks forward to her job as a care plan coordinator for the Southwest School Corp.

"I just can't wait to celebrate today with my peers and my family who've been with me through everything leading up to this day," said Chickadaunce, who will also continue her education by pursuing a master's degree in social work.

In the afternoon ceremony, Emilee



Submitted photo

Afternoon commencement speaker Emilee Roberts addresses her classmates during ceremonies Saturday at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

Roberts of Terre Haute, who received her doctorate in global leadership, addressed the Woods Online and graduate degree recipients.

"As the mission of the Sisters of Providence echoes - "carry the spirit of The Woods into the world - be agents of hope, and work for a just and hopeful world," Roberts said during her address.

John Roshel, a Woods Online student who earned a certificate, plans to teach middle school in the area.

"This is a day to celebrate," said Roshel, of Terre Haute. "It's a celebration of all the hard work I put in over the last four years."

Paramedic Science to Bachelor of Science in nursing program graduates Kylin Warbelow, of Fairbanks, Alaska, and Angela Niemi, of Kenai, Alaska, and friends were thrilled to take the time off work as flight paramedics to come to campus for the ceremony.

"We've been telling each other we were going to go to nursing school for as long as we've known each other," Warbelow said. "We found this program, and it allowed us to continue to be

momms and be flight paramedics. We had to come here a few times, but being on campus today brings a lot of closure to the program. It's so worthwhile to be here, to pause and to celebrate all that we accomplished."

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

The 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: Megan N. Chesser, Paige Chickadaunce, Megan Stagg, Elizabeth Wetzel.

Woods Online recipients: Chelsea Putnam, Mina Reihani-Masouleh, Emmy Jo Sorrels, Courtney Szubinski, Kylin Warbelow.

*The information for this item was submitted to the Tribune-Star by Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.*