

2013 Spring Commencement

Dr. Deborah Ford, Chancellor

**Welcome:**

Good afternoon and congratulations to the University of Wisconsin-Parkside Class of 2013.

As I look across this impressive group of graduates, I am proud of you and your accomplishments. You continue to inspire me with your stories of perseverance and focus on serving others. You, the class of 2013, have enriched our learning environment and have left a lasting legacy of academic excellence and student success at UW-Parkside.

I imagine a question that might be on your minds, "Am I prepared? Am I ready?" It is the mission of our university to ensure that you are. At the University of Wisconsin-Parkside we are committed to providing you access to and engagement in inspiring intellectual and practical experiences that provide a vigorous education that will serve you for a lifetime.

Before me is an exciting group of learners, each of you pondering important ideas, ambitions and skills. The simple fact is you and your fellow graduates represent a new era in college graduates. You understand more than any other class before you, that your journey will have twists and turns. Challenges and obstacles do not frighten you, but energize you. You have and will thrive through your ability to assess, problem solve and create solutions. You will lead through confidence in your ability to appreciate difference, actively listen, learn, adapt and innovate. In short, you have been taught to live life as learners.

By attending the University of Wisconsin-Parkside you have been immersed in a community that is shaped by great diversity -- more than any other university in the UW System or in our nearby communities. Our diversity truly reflects the reality of the emerging 21<sup>st</sup> century global society. The diverse nature of your educational experience will enable you to make a difference as you seek and find meaningful roles in an increasingly changing world.

Our university also nurtures and celebrates those that are “first generation” students. Indeed, 58% of you are the very first in your families to graduate from college. The University of Wisconsin-Parkside not only enriches minds and changes lives but advances generations of families to new levels of empowerment and success. Thank you to all of you who have sacrificed and supported your graduates on this journey.

Yes, class of 2013 you are ready! To you, who have earned the first college degree in your family’s history; to you that are receiving your college degree while working full time, part time or raising families; to you the class of 2013 I offer a thought gleaned from our Associate Professor of English and Film Studies, Jay McCroy while he addressed a group of UW-Parkside students last week...

*“Be proud of who you are as artists, scientists, writers; as librarians, computer scientists; as historians or healthcare and businesses professionals and much more...You are not born to simply work, pay bills and pay taxes, you are born to live...so live a life worth living”.*

I am confident you are ready to contribute to our community and apply all that you have learned here at UW-Parkside. So that the rest of the world knows, I’d like for you all to sit up, smile and on the count of three say “We Are Ready”.

1 – 2 – 3... “We Are Ready”

We’re going to post this on facebook and tweet the world – hashtag parksidegrad – that the University of Wisconsin-Parkside Class of 2013 is ready! Congratulations!