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1,700 graduate from CWU on Saturday

By Julia Moreno staff intern 21 hrs ago



(Brian Myrick / Daily Record)

Graduates toward the stage to get their diplomas during Central Washington University commencement ceremonies, Sat

Family and friends craned their necks and crowded around barriers to catch a glimpse of this year's Central Washington University graduates during the start of commencement exercises Saturday at Tomlinson Stadium.

Graduates of the College of Business and the College of Education and Professional Studies had their ceremony in the morning, followed in the afternoon with College of Arts and Humanities, College of the Sciences and interdisciplinary and individual studies.

A total of 1,742 students graduated from CWU this year, up from 1,719 in 2015.

Washington Supreme Court Justice Mary Yu, this year's commencement speaker, asked the class of 2016 to take a moment and absorb the experience.

"Look around you, see your friends and family and your classmates and grasp the reality that you indeed have made it," she said. "You deserve to be here."

Yu is the state's first openly gay Justice, the first Asian American justice, and the first Latina justice. She grew up in inner city Chicago with immigrant parents and went to Dominican University and received her bachelors in theology. She received her graduate degree in theology from Loyola University and law degree from Norte Dame. She joined the state Supreme Court in 2014.

She spoke about how some students in the crowd might be first generation college graduates like she was. She added that the day was not only for the students, but also for the families in the audience and it was their achievement as well.

"Take a personal moment today to thank your parents, your grandparents, your cousins, your uncles, your aunts, your spouse or significant other," Yu said. "Because one never achieves success alone and this is their day too."

American dream

Yu said education symbolizes that "America is the place that you can make a future out of." She said that education in this country serves as the means for economic success and achievement.

"Its sole focus is to develop your intelligence and connect your skills and talents to your real life purpose," she said. "Your real reason for being here."

Yu said she never would have dreamed of being a Supreme Court justice and education is the sole reason why she has been so successful. She touched on the current political climate and assured graduates that problems today will not break the American spirit.

CWU graduate Jean Louffler said she appreciated the speech. She's a nutrition major and is planning on being a registered dietician after college.

"It talked a lot about the political environment happening right now," she said. "It was more political than I really thought it would be and it was refreshing."

Yu ended her speech with two pieces of advice for the CWU graduates.

"One, show up for life, be present to the world around you. Be visible and be seen, showing up for life shows everyone you care," she said. "Two, make your life a message of hope. As Americans we share a future together."

Marking the occasion

Students filed across the stage to receive their diplomas to the hoots and hollers of family and friends in the distance, with caps decorated with such sayings as "Going back to Kindergarten!" and "Thanks Mom and Dad!"

Ryan Anderson, president of the Associated Students of Central Washington University, led students in the turning of tassels. Some construction management students wore hard hats adorned with their tassels.

Afterward student singer Michael McCormick led students in singing the CWU school song.

"This is your alma mater, I hope you continue to respect it, support it, and love it," said CWU President James Gaudino. "Class of 2016, welcome to the company of educated men and women."

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