

Keiser University celebrates class of 2013

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Written by Kelli Lane
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L to R: Keiser University Tallahassee Campus President Maria Mead; Commissioner Dr. Tony Bennett; Teresa Slade, Valedictorian; Keiser University Vice Chancellor Belinda Keiser / Special to the Chronicle



Graduate celebrates crossing the stage at Keiser University Class of 2013 Commencement / Special to the Chronicle

This month, Keiser University's Tallahassee campus proudly recognized the Class of 2013. Celebrating 220 graduates at Lawton Chiles High School in front of a standing room only crowd of parents, grandparents, children, siblings and friends, the Honorable Commissioner Tony Bennett, Florida Department of Education, served as keynote commencement speaker. His inspiring words reminded graduates that they can and must "pay it forward."

Bennett told the graduates that they may not ever be able to fully pay back someone who has supported them on the journey to this day, but you can always pay it forward.

"Seeing students graduate college well-prepared to pursue their dreams is very rewarding," Bennett said. "It was my honor to be a part of Keiser University's graduation ceremony and I congratulate them on their success."

Tallahassee campus president Maria Mead, having been with Keiser University for over 20 years, said that she is amazed with the collective talent and drive for success that the Class of 2013 possesses.

"The graduation ceremony is when it all comes together for our students," Mead said. "Our university is unique in that we know each one of our students, and we have worked with them to overcome any obstacles they may have had in their paths. Whether they were adverse to public speaking, changing careers, single parents, caregivers, or already working full-time, that night they became Keiser University graduates and we could not be more proud!"

Keiser University's Vice Chancellor of Community Relations and Student Advancement, Belinda Keiser, introduced Bennett, whose appointment to the position was announced in December 2012. Bennett is the former superintendent of public instruction for the state of Indiana. Keiser is an alumnus of Florida State University, Godby High School, and North Florida Christian as well as a gubernatorial appointee to many councils, taskforces, and commissions.

Belinda Keiser welcomed the graduates as new members of the Alumni Association and reminded them that they are well-prepared to soar as leaders in their chosen professions and within their communities as new Keiser University graduates.

Teresa Slade, earning her bachelor's degree in Business Administration was the Tallahassee campus 2013 Class Valedictorian, also maintaining perfect attendance. Mrs. Slade's decision to complete her bachelor's degree is a 30-year goal now realized. Her journey at Keiser University continues on as she is currently continuing pursuing her Master's in Business Administration degree. In her commencement address, Slade said that she remembered attending orientation when Mead had all new students participate in a success/failure exercise.

"She asked us to write the word 'success' on one circle and 'failure' on another," said Slade. "President Mead told us to throw out 'failure' because it was not an option. I took this to heart and never forgot what she said.

During her address, Slade held up her circle with the word 'success' written on it which she has held throughout her entire educational experience.

Keiser University (KU) is a private, not-for-profit University serving nearly 20,000 students pursuing doctoral through associate degrees on 15 campuses and online and employing 3,500 staff and faculty.

Keiser University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award certificates and degrees at the associate, baccalaureate, masters and doctoral levels. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Keiser University.

Keiser University's educational reach extends globally through its international programs, including the Latin Division, a cooperative agreement in the Eastern European nation of Moldova, and an off-site campus in Shanghai, China.