Polk's Colleges Schedule Spring Graduations

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LAKELAND | Two college commencements down, three times as many to go, and more than 2,300 graduates.

Florida Southern College graduated 307 students at The Lakeland Center on Saturday, 57 more than at its spring 2010 commencement. The college's growth and improvement in retaining students led to a noticeable change:

Its graduation ceremony was held on campus to allow more space.

Southeastern University's 399 graduates will be the largest graduating class in its 75-year history.

And Keiser University's Lakeland campus will graduate its first students who have earned master's degrees there.

"These students have persevered toward completing their degrees with passion and vigilance," said Rebecca McDonnell, president of the Keiser Lakeland campus. "I am extremely proud of the technical and professional skills this graduating class possesses."

Webster University started the ceremonies April 9 at Lake Mirror Center Theatre in Lakeland with 56 masters-degree graduates.

Florida Southern's Saturday ceremony recognized 287 undergraduates and 20 who received master's degrees. Duncan L. Niedermuehler, chief executive officer and a director for the New York Stock Exchange's parent company, NYSE Euronext, was FSC's guest speaker at The Lakeland Center.

Now ceremonies start coming fast and furiously:

Polk State College: Holding its 104th commencement at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at The Lakeland Center Arena.

Almost three-fourths of the more than 700 graduates will receive associate in arts degrees, which are transferable to state universities or into Polk State's bachelor of applied science programs. Others will receive other forms of associate degrees, a bachelor of applied science or various workforce-related program certificates.

Willis N. Holcombe, chancellor of the Florida College System since October 2007, will be the guest speaker.

Ron Garl, a Lakeland golf course architect known worldwide, will be named PSC's distinguished alumnus for 2011.

Garl received his associate in arts degree in 1966 as a member of the college's first graduating class. The University of Florida named him a distinguished alumnus in 2003. He was inducted into the Polk County Schools Hall of Fame in 2009.

Garl has designed more than 250 courses worldwide, including more than 100 in...
Florida.

Southeastern University: Having its Spring Ceremony at 7:30 p.m. Friday at The Lakeland Center. Most of its graduates, 307 of the 399, will get undergraduate degrees, but 92 are receiving master’s degrees.

Pastor Craig Groeschel, author of "The Christian Atheist: Believing in God but Living As if He Doesn’t Exist," will give the commencement address and receive an honorary doctorate. Groeschel is founding and senior pastor of LifeChurch.ty, which meets in 13 locations nationwide as well as online.Warner University: Holding its ceremony at 10 a.m. Saturday in the courtyard between the Ponsious Learning Resource Center and the Rigal Student Center on its Lake Wales campus, 13895 U.S. 27, Lake Wales. Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd will be guest speaker.

A total of 146 degrees are being awarded: 110 bachelor’s degrees, 22 master’s degrees and 14 associate degrees.

Webber International University: Presents its 84th annual commencement at 11 a.m. Saturday in the gymnasium on its Babson Park campus, 1201 N. Scenic Highway. Its 182 graduates will have Ted Moore, president of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida, as their guest speaker.

University of South Florida Polytechnic: Conducting its commencement, with 168 students being recognized, at 7 p.m. Monday in the Lakeland Center’s Youkey Theatre. Most, 159, will receive bachelor’s degrees. The other nine receive master’s degrees. David Touchton, past president of the Central Florida Development Council, will receive a distinguished service award.

He has been strongly supportive of USF Poly’s growth and plans for the new campus.

Keiser University: Having its commencement at 7 p.m. May 13 at Without Walls Church, 777 Carpenters Way, Lakeland. It will have 400 graduates, including those from the master’s degree programs. State Rep. Kelli Stargel, R-Lakeland, will be keynote speaker.

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