51st Annual Spring Commencement

MAY 11, 2024
3 P.M. CEREMONY
Kent State University at Stark
51st Annual Spring Commencement

Mace Bearer
Stephen E. Neaderhiser, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English and Faculty Council Chair

“The Star-Spangled Banner”
Performed by Timothy Culver, Professor of Voice
Kent State University’s Hugh A. Glauser School of Music

Welcome
Rev. Ryan Johanning, Executive Director
Interfaith Campus Ministry

Introduction of Special Guests
Denise A. Seachrist, Ph.D.
Dean and Chief Administrative Officer

Recognition of Students with Institutional Honors
Denise A. Seachrist, Ph.D.

Introduction of Speaker
Denise A. Seachrist, Ph.D.

Convocation Address
“The Only Way is Through...”
Todd Starkey
Kent State Head Women’s Basketball Coach

Presentation of Baccalaureate Degree Candidates
Robert D. Sturr, Ph.D.
Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs

Conferral of Degrees
Denise A. Seachrist, Ph.D.

Orator
Stephen E. Neaderhiser, Ph.D.

Presentation of Distinguished Teaching Awards
Denise A. Seachrist, Ph.D.

Closing Remarks
Denise A. Seachrist, Ph.D.

“Hail to Thee, Our Alma Mater”
Performed by the Kent State University Men’s Chorus
Directed by Benjamin Ayling, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor Emeritus, Music Education
Kent State University’s Hugh A. Glauser School of Music
Coach Todd Starkey grew up in nearby Canfield, Ohio, and graduated in 1998 with a bachelor’s degree in outdoor education from Montreat College. While his collegiate career began as a basketball and tennis student-athlete at Mars Hill College, Coach Starkey is currently in his eighth season as head coach of the Kent State University women’s basketball team. He led the team to the NCAA Tournament by winning the 2024 Mid-American Conference Tournament, marking the team’s first appearance in tournament action in 22 years.

Already the second-winningest coach in school history with 143 victories, including four against opponents from Power Five conferences, Coach Starkey has now led the Golden Flashes to five postseason tournaments with WNIT berths in 2017, 2019, 2022 and 2023. He steered the program to back-to-back 20-win seasons for the first time in 13 seasons. He credits much of his coaching success to recruiting talented student-athletes, focusing on prolific three-point scoring and creating defensive strategies that are hard to overcome.

Coach Starkey was named 2017 MAC Coach of the Year for his efforts in guiding Kent State to one of the biggest turnarounds in NCAA Division I women’s basketball during his first season on the sideline. The Golden Flashes finished the season with a 19-13 overall record, had the nation’s largest Ratings Power Index improvement – jumping 222 spots from the previous season – and boasted the fifth most-improved record in the country. Despite being picked to finish last during the preseason, Coach Starkey led the team to a 13-5 conference mark to win the program’s first MAC East Division title since 2004-2005. The regular season ended with a seven-game winning streak, which surpassed the number of conference games the team had won over the previous two seasons combined.
The 26-year veteran coach came to Kent State after spending two seasons as an assistant coach at Indiana, where he guided the program’s recruiting, practice and game preparation, scouting reports, scheduling, player development and technology applications. During his time with the Hoosiers, he helped lead the team to several record-breaking seasons.

His first head coaching job came at Division II Lenior-Rhyne University in Hickory, North Carolina, where Coach Starkey became the winningest coach in program history in his nine-year tenure. He received the Southern Atlantic Conference Coach of the Year recognition on four occasions. After leading Lenoir-Rhyne to one of the greatest seasons in program history, he was named the 2009 Russell Athletic/WBCA NCAA Division II National Coach of the Year.

Coach Starkey’s coaching career began at his alma mater, Montreat College, in North Carolina. As an assistant men’s basketball coach for five seasons, he helped the team to an NAIA National Tournament appearance in 2000.

During his coaching years, Coach Starkey has made academics a priority for his players. As such, Kent State has earned a spot on the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association Academic Top 25 Honor Roll during two of the past three years. During the 2022-2023 season, the Golden Flashes ranked 22nd and placed 16th during the 2021-2022 season.
Academic Year 2023-2024

Baccalaureate Degree Candidates

AMBASSADOR CRAWFORD COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Bachelor of Business Administration

***Joshua John Boley
*Eric Paul Desilets, Jr.
*Conrad D. Edmisten
    Brianna J. Farmer
***Anna M. Freeman
**Sean M. Gayler
Joclynn Marie Marshall
Natalie Marie Richards
Madison Grace Shaw

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Bachelor of Arts

Nathan Richard Fontes, Sr.
    Madeline George
    Emily Rose Jones
    Ashlee Gamble McDermott
Miles Alexander McNair-Brown
    Blake A. Piatko
    Allyson T. Purdy
*Bailey M. Witwer

Graduating ***Summa Cum Laude **Magna Cum Laude *Cum Laude
Graduating ***Summa Cum Laude  **Magna Cum Laude  *Cum Laude

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Bachelor of Science
Sarah Theresa Grimes
Alana Monet Hill
Kennedy Nicole Javins
***Kiley R. Kinsey
Kristen Lee Matheny
Megan Miller
Miranda Nicole Shovestull

Bachelor of Science in Education
**Kathleen Ann Brady
Autumn Nichole George
**Alyssa Noel Owens
Haley Jordin Weller

Academic Year 2023-2024
Baccalaureate Degree Candidates
Academic Year 2023-2024

Baccalaureate Degree Candidates

COLLEGE OF NURSING

Bachelor of Science in Nursing

**Haleigh Morgan Alexander
**Samantha M. Baranek
Mackayli Isabella Bolyard-Pizana
Alexis A. Budimlic
Zoe Elisabeth Buell
Natalie Dawn Cannon
Carli Jade Cummins
*Britney Charlyn Cupery
*Samantha Davis
Mckenzie Eiseman
**Brandon Wade Fee
*Olivia Claire Francis
Tessa A. Fusko
Rebecca Liz Haught
Ella Rose Hettich
**Alyssa Jean McCarthy
Abigail Mikaela McGhee
Scarlet Hope Muncey
*Kaitlyn Elizabeth Nicholson
Baylee Renee Offenberger
***Chloe Alexis Orin
Michaela Leigh Patterson
Matt David Plucinski
Alexis Lee Saunders
Marlaina J. Slabach
Tori Elaine Thompson
Alex Corey Tice
*Lana Jo Ulrich
Hannah Paige Vaughn
Madalyn Suzanne Wenzel
*Carlie Jeanette Whisner

Graduating ***Summa Cum Laude  **Magna Cum Laude  *Cum Laude
The Honors College

Seniors in the Honors College who, by having completed a senior honors project or thesis in their major field and by having evidenced exceptional academic performances, have fulfilled the requirements for Graduation with University, General or Department Honors or Honors College Scholar designation.

Honors College Scholar
Alexandra Abood

Cords

Honor Cords

Summa Cum Laude - Blue and Gold
Highest honors awarded to students with a grade point average of at least 3.9 on a 4.0 scale. This is equivalent to an A average.

Magna Cum Laude - Gold
High honors awarded to students with a grade point average of at least 3.7 on a 4.0 scale. This is equivalent to a B+ average.

Cum Laude - Blue
Honors awarded to students with a grade point average of at least 3.5 on a 4.0 scale. This is equivalent to a strong B average.

Americana Cords

Red, White and Blue
Select members of today’s class have committed themselves to serve our country through the Armed Forces. Veterans and active military members graduating today are wearing red, white and blue cords.

Rising Scholars Cords

Blue, White and Gold
Recognizing our students from the Rising Scholars Program. Rising Scholars graduating today are wearing blue, white and gold cords.
Rising Scholars

The Rising Scholars Program began as a partnership between Canton City Schools and Kent State University at Stark in 2017. Freshmen students at Canton McKinley High School applied to join the Bulldog Flash Academic Institute, as it was then called.

In 2020, in collaboration with similar programs at other Kent State Regional Campuses, the Bulldog Flash Academic Institute became Rising Scholars, a system-wide initiative to support and mentor middle and high school students from across our region.

Kent State Stark expanded its Rising Scholars partnerships to include Canton City School District, Alliance City School District, Canton Local School District, Plain Local School District and Fairless Local School District.

Rising Scholars seeks to give first generation and underrepresented students a pathway to achieve a college degree. Students receive mentoring while in high school, attend our annual Rising Scholars summer institute and are welcomed into a supportive community once they matriculate to Kent State Stark to begin their college journey.
2023-24 Departmental Award Recipients

These students have been selected by their professors as being outstanding representatives of their academic disciplines and achieving an elevated academic standard.

Art
Faith Geib

Biological Sciences
Henry Boyes
Jada Howard
Erin Kelly

Chemistry & Biochemistry
Alexia Howell

Communication Studies
Kellie Rose Kordinak

Computer Science
Kyle Arquilla
Melanie Darling

Earth Sciences
Emily Rider

English
Austin Vandegrift

Environmental Studies
Hannah Conley

Geography
Nathan Cutting

History
Jamie Johnson

Honors Program
Kellie Rose Kordinak
Human Development and Family Science
Sarah Caskey

Management
Anna Freeman
Destiny Stevenson
Joshua Valloric

Marketing and Entrepreneurship
Spencer Brown

Mathematical Sciences
Sydney McGlaughlin
Aubrey Thorne

Middle Childhood Education
Emma Coblentz

Music
Gary Couch
Brayden Crites
Julia Garaux

Nursing
Lana Ulrich

Political Science
Nathan Cutting

Psychological Sciences
Elisa Grecar

Sociology and Criminology
Emmalee Cowan
Elias Moody

Women’s Studies
Amber Lanctot
Distinguished Teaching Award Recipients

2024

Robert King
Associate Professor
English

Lisa Waite
Senior Lecturer
Communication Studies
Past Distinguished Teaching Award Recipients

Ashley Meinke 2023
Alexis Baker 2022
Sebastian Birch 2021
Deepraj Mukherjee 2019
Mason Shuman 2018
Lindsay Starkey 2017
Matthew Lehner 2016
Paul Andaloro 2015
Julie Cremeans-Smith 2014
Paula Sato 2013
Carey McDougall 2012
Robert Hamilton IV 2011
Daniel A. Castaneda 2010
Leslie A. Heaphy 2009
Robert King 2008
Don Thacker 2007
John Harkness 2006
Carrie E. Schweitzer 2005
Kim R. Finer 2004
Leslie A. Heaphy 2003
Robert D. Sturr 2002
Bathi A. Kasturiarachchi 2001
Penny L. Bernstein 2000
Philip C. Weeks 1999
Maria José Delgado 1998
Cynthia M. Barb 1997
Kim R. Finer 1996
John Harkness 1995
Kathryn A. Cartechine 1994
Russell L. Ensign 1993
Sharon Camner 1992
Thomas M. Norton-Smith 1991
James G. Brooks 1990
Inga E. Mullen 1989
Patricia A. Gruitzmacher 1988
Sharon B. Carson 1987
Marylouise Bush 1986
Thomas Sosnowski & Kathi Walz 1985
John Harkness & Howard Tritt 1984
Charles W. Dayton & George E. Klee 1983
Warren Norton & Gaylord Shaw 1982
John Carson & Terry Sosnowski 1981
Sharon B. Carson & Frederick M. Worrell 1980
Linda Dooley & Kendall Ward 1979
Inga Mullen & Thomas Sosnowski 1978
John Harkness & James Lotze 1977
Maryanne Metcalfe & Phillip Robb 1976
Marylouise Bush & John Carson 1975
Laura McGregor & Kathi Walz 1974
Kent State University at Stark
Advisory Board Members

Ajay Das
Vice President of Strategy and Business Development,
The Timken Company

Faye A. Heston
Secretary/Treasurer, Board of Trustees for the
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy Foundation

John Humphrey, M.D.
Executive Director, North Canton Medical Foundation

Mary Ellen Icaza
Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Stark Library

Brent May
Superintendent, Plain Local Schools

Thomas Norton-Smith, Ph.D.
Emeritus Professor, Kent State University at Stark

Byron Palitto
Founder and Chief Executive Officer,
Palitto Consulting Services, Inc.

Scott Pollock
President, Aspen Industrial Consulting Services

Richard S. Regula
Stark County Commissioner

Diane Stevens Robinson
Former President and Chief Executive Officer,
The Greater Stark County Urban League

Tracy Stevens - Chair
Retired External Affairs Manager, Dominion Energy

Keni Thomas
Former United States Army Ranger and award-winning
country music recording artist and songwriter

John Zucal
Superintendent, Conotton Valley Union Local School District

EX OFFICIO
Denise A. Seachrist, Ph.D.
Dean and Chief Administrative Officer,
Kent State University at Stark
Kent State University Alma Mater
Hail to Thee, Our Alma Mater

From the beauty land O-hi-o comes a universal praise, 'Tis the song of Alma Mater that her sons and daughters raise. 'Tis a Hail to Kent for ever, on the Cuy-ah-og-a shore, Now we join the loving thousands as they sing it o'er and o'er. Hail to thee our Alma Mater O, how beautiful thou art, High en-throned up on the hill-top, Reigning o'er every heart.