



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Governor Tony Evers / Secretary Kevin A. Carr

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DOC, MATC Celebrate Graduates, Growing Partnership

Madison, Wis. - Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes joined the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) and Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) Friday morning to honor the accomplishments of 25 men and women in DOC care who received their diplomas from MATC. All earned their Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree in either the Spring or Fall semester of 2021.

Lt. Governor Barnes commended the graduates, but he also spoke with them about obstacles they may have faced prior to incarceration and will face upon release. "This program is one step in the direction of destigmatizing the reentry process, and helping everyone establish what they want for the future, for themselves and their families," he said. "I want to thank everyone who has helped make this program a success."

"I believe education is vital," DOC Secretary Kevin Carr told the graduates. "That's why I'm so proud of this collaboration with MATC, and why I'm so proud of you today, because it's about you. I can sit here and talk about all the people, partnerships and resources it took to make this happen, but really at the end of the day, it came down to each of you setting a goal and making the commitment to earn your degree. No matter the challenges you face in the future, nothing can take away that degree. Nothing can take away your accomplishment today as a graduate."

The graduates are part of the Second Chance Pell pilot program, a collaborative effort between DOC and MATC that has grown significantly in recent years, from 13 DOC students in the Spring semester of 2017 semester to 192 last Spring.

"For the candidates for graduation today, I use the word extraordinary, for the decision each of you made to take positive step forward," said MATC President Dr. Vicki Martin. "To all of you, I want to say congratulations."

Martin Medina, a person in DOC care at Redgranite Correctional Institution, served as the graduate speaker for the group. He started by saying that, initially, he didn't want to be in the position, explaining that he is naturally an introvert. He also shared a little about his journey growing up a minority in poverty, with no college graduates in his immediate family. He also acknowledged the challenges faced over the past few years along the road to this day.

"But here we are, college graduates," he said to his fellow graduates. "Though change is inevitable, positive change is what matters and that is what we represent today ... We make no excuse for the past, just equal opportunity for the future."

Due to current COVID-19 protocols, DOC held the event and connected the graduates via videoconference, so they could all watch as diplomas were awarded in smaller, individual ceremonies at their respective institutions, including Fox Lake Correctional Institution, Oakhill Correctional Institution, Redgranite Correctional Institution, Robert E. Ellsworth Correctional Center, Marshall E. Sherrer Correctional Center, Felmers O. Chaney Correctional Center, Racine Correctional Institution, Drug Abuse Correctional Center, Thompson Correctional Center and Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution.