



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Governor Tony Evers / Secretary Kevin A. Carr

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Opportunity and Hard Work Lead to Big Day for Nine Men

Waupun, Wis. - Robert Alexander seemed calm and steady through the entire ceremony, including the speech he delivered on behalf of his fellow graduates. It wasn't until after the program, when he was asked by reporters about the rousing cheer he received from his family in attendance, that the emotions of the day caught up with him.

"I spent a lot of my life not being what my mother knew that I was. So, to see the pride in her face... " Alexander said before choking up, then quickly composing himself. "Yeah, I was humbled. I'm tired of not making my momma proud, you know. Seeing her see me do something she knew I could do, it was too long coming."

Alexander and eight others were honored at Waupun Correctional Institution this morning for their work to become just the second group of men to ever graduate from a four-year college baccalaureate program inside a DOC institution.

"When I enrolled in the program, I expected to complete it, because I was entering into a commitment," Alexander explained. "Did I think coming to prison I would be a college graduate? No. I didn't think one of the things I would get out of prison was a college degree."

The degree he and others earned is in Biblical Studies, with a minor in Psychology. It is offered through a partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC), Trinity International University and the Wisconsin Inmate Education Association (WIEA). Starting in 2017, DOC offered a small space at Waupun Correctional Institution where Trinity established an accredited branch campus. The university provides the staff, curriculum and degrees. The WIEA pays 100% of the tuition, leaving no costs for the students or the state.

"Of course, I can talk all day about all the people, partnerships and resources it took to make this happen, but at the end of the day, it came down to the will and drive of our graduates," DOC Sec. Kevin Carr told the graduates during the ceremony. "To each of you, let me be among the first of many today, to say congratulations."

"When we processed here a little while ago and I saw on the chairs the names and the word 'graduate', I realized that by the time you come up here, shake hands and go back, we need to change the labels on the chairs," said Trinity International University President, Dr. Nicholas Perrin. "Because no longer are you going to be graduates. You'll be Trinity alumni."

“You can’t have correction without having education. It’s impossible,” Alexander said after the ceremony. “For me, getting this education has allowed me to be far more prepared for freedom than I was before. I understand differently and I’m able to think far more critically.”

Alexander’s release date is not till 2030, but he is already looking to the future. He says he hopes to earn a Master’s Degree in Psychology and potentially pursue a career in substance abuse counseling, noting that, “A lot of the things I got into myself, drugs and alcohol were a catalyst.”

There are 29 people in DOC care currently enrolled in the program, including the nine graduates. Each was held to the same admissions standards Trinity International University applies to all students, including having at least a high school equivalency diploma.