



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Governor Tony Evers / Secretary Kevin A. Carr

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Graduation at Waupun Correctional Institution a First for Wisconsin DOC

(Waupun, Wis.) – Twenty people receive their diploma Tuesday morning at Waupun Correctional Institution and become the first class of individuals in a Wisconsin DOC-sponsored program to graduate with a bachelor's degree.

All earned a liberal arts degree in Biblical Studies from [Trinity International University](#) (TIU), with a minor in Psychology. The program is fully funded by a private foundation and delivered at no cost to those enrolled or Wisconsin taxpayers. TIU established a branch campus at Waupun Correctional Institution, developed the curriculum and hired staff to run the program.

“What an amazing day for each of you,” DOC Sec. Kevin Carr said when addressing the graduates. “We 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, making a commitment, and then working hard every day over the last four years to complete this program.”

There are roughly 75 persons in DOC care currently enrolled in the program, including the 20 graduates. Each was held to the same admissions standards TIU applies to all students, including having at least a high school equivalency diploma.

“Even though we have reached the point of graduation, we know graduating is not the end result,” said graduate speaker August White. “We will be at the beginning of being more exemplary, resilient, kinder, creative and empathetic, and practicing and building upon the beneficial things we have learned.”

Enrollment was offered to persons in DOC care across the state, and the applicant pool narrowed down based on behavior and education. Fifteen of the 20 graduates of this first class are classified as minimum or medium security, and understood they would have to transfer to or remain at WCI, a maximum-security institution, to take part in the program.

“I think it is important to consider ‘why’ these graduates chose to pursue a degree,” said TIU President Nicholas Perrin. “Some will be in a prison for the rest of their lives. For them, this degree is not about setting themselves up for success upon return to their community, but about making a difference inside the walls of Wisconsin’s institutions and serving fellow prisoners.”

The Biblical Studies degree through TIU is just one of many [educational opportunities](#) offered to persons in the care of the WIDOC, including:

- Adult basic education services
- High school equivalency
- Career technical education/vocational programs
- Associated degrees through Second Chance Pell-funded programs
- UW’s [Odyssey Behind Bars](#) program

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