



Photo by Todd Luck

A crowd of thousands watch last week's commencement service.

Grads

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Rain or nothing else would have kept Avery Hubbard from walking across the stage to receive her degree; she'd endured too many challenges to be deterred.

The Indianapolis, Ind. native has Sickle Cell Anemia. An intense bout with the painful blood cell disorder on the first day of class during her sophomore year sent her to the hospital for a two-week stay. As she lay in the hospital, she was visited by classmates, staffers and professors.

"I actually cried in the hospital, not out of sadness, but joy that people were understanding, because I used to not want to talk about Sickle Cell; I used to want to hide it, just be normal, but seeing how people respond and understand and actually wanted to learn and not, you know, feel a different type of way about me, made me feel a lot better," she said.

Hubbard graduated with a degree in clinical lab science and a 3.9 GPA. She has a summer internship at the National Institutes of Health. She's also interned at the Centers for Disease Control, where she hopes to work as a clinical researcher.

Husband and wife Michael and Jill Drennen of Mocksville turned to WSSU to help rewrite their futures after the economic downturn devastated their lives in 2008. She was forced to shut down her herbal products store, and he had to scale down his air purifying company. The couple, high school sweethearts who married when they were 18, earned education degrees Friday and plan to devote themselves to the service teaching children.

They became full time students at WSSU at the age of 40, while parenting four children – two in college and two in high school. The adventurous couple now plans to head to the small Eskimo village of Akiachak, Alaska to teach elementary school in the harsh wilderness.

The couple, who are white, said they felt a deep connection to their professors and were welcomed at the historically black university.

"It's set us up to understand diversity more," said Jill. "We've been immersed in another culture here and that has set us up to be able to go to Alaska and be immersed in another type of culture there; we have that experience"

Veaceslav Driglov has



WSSU Photo by Garrett Garm

Veaceslav Driglov waves to the camera.



Photo by Todd Luck

Students march into the stadium.



WSSU Photo by Garrett Garm
Steve Pemberton

an even farther post-graduation trip to make. He is returning to his native Tiraspol in Moldova, a republic in Eastern Europe. Driglov, who received an MBA, came to the U.S. as an Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellow.

Though WSSU was chosen for him through the Edmund S. Muskie program – which allows emerging leaders to do their graduate studies in the United States – Driglov said he is glad to be a Ram and to have called the Twin City home.

"I like people, I like southern hospitality," he said. "I like the attitude of people here. And I made lots of good friends, and it made a life-changing experience impact on me."

An elected city official who also runs Tiraspol's Agency For Investment, Attraction and Trade Promotion, Driglov had to conduct his duties back home via Skype. He hopes to help his country grow with what he's learned and help to estab-

lish business partnerships between Moldova and North Carolina.

Chelsea Burwell walked away with a degree in Mass Communication and a 3.9 GPA. The Chesterfield, Va. native served as editor of WSSU's award-winning student newspaper, *The News Argus*. She credits her late mother with instilling within her a love of education. Burwell said she knew her mom, who passed away eight years ago, would have been proud of her and had "the best seat in the house" at Friday's commencement.

She's now headed to graduate school at Georgetown University. After that, she hopes to work for a magazine, preferably *Essence*, whose name was among the words embossed a top her graduation cap.

Burwell, who dreams of one day starting her own magazine, said she is undaunted by the shift from print media to digital forms.

"Everyone's saying, 'it's going digital, it's going digital; print is dying,' and I don't think it's dying; I think it's evolving," she said. "It just needs a serious facelift, and I think, not to be cocky or confident, I think my generation is the generation that is going to give media that facelift that it needs."

Before walking across the stage, graduates heard words of encouragement from Steve Pemberton, Walgreens' chief diversity officer and vice president, who delivered the keynote address.

ABRAMSON @ WFU



WFU Photo

Jill Abramson, the recently ousted New York Times executive editor, is hooded Monday with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree by professor Alessandra Von Burg during Wake Forest University's commencement ceremony. Abramson, whose departure from the venerable paper has stirred controversy and garnered international headlines, gave the address, urging the nearly 2,000 graduates to be resilient.



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