

Southwest Baptist University

# FALL COMMENCEMENT

CLASS OF TWO THOUSAND TWENTY FIVE



JANE AND KEN MEYER WELLNESS AND SPORTS CENTER  
Bolivar, Missouri



Southwest Baptist  
UNIVERSITY

# Commencement Ceremony

Decorum .....	<u>5</u>
<b>Friday, December 12</b>	
<b>Commencement Ceremony – 11 a.m.</b> .....	<u>7</u>
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*Please take a moment and silence your devices to respect those graduating today.*

Dear Graduates, Families, and Friends,

On behalf of the entire Southwest Baptist University community, I am honored to extend a warm welcome to each of you as we gather to celebrate the remarkable achievements of the Class of 2025. Today marks a significant milestone in the lives of our graduates, and it is a privilege to share in this momentous occasion with all of you.

As we look around this room, we see the culmination of countless hours of study, challenges overcome, and milestones achieved. Each graduate sitting before us has shown remarkable resilience and commitment, and today, we acknowledge and honor their incredible journey.

To the families and friends who have supported our graduates, your encouragement, love, and sacrifice have been instrumental in their success. Your presence here today is a testament to the strong network of support that has helped our students reach this point, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

To the graduates, today is a celebration of your potential and the promise that your future holds. As you step into the next chapter of your lives, remember that the education and experiences you have gained here are the foundation upon which you will build your future. Embrace the opportunities that lie ahead with the same enthusiasm and determination that have brought you to this day.

On behalf of the entire university, I extend heartfelt congratulations to our graduates. We are incredibly proud of you, and we look forward to watching you make your mark on the world.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard J. Melson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard J. Melson, Ph.D.

President, Southwest Baptist University

## Highland Bagpipes

Bagpipes were traditionally used in military and ceremonial contexts, adding a sense of grandeur and solemnity to events. The use of bagpipes in academic ceremonies, such as commencements, became popular in the late 20th century. Their distinctive sound helps to mark the significance of the occasion and create a memorable atmosphere.

***Bagpipes symbolize tradition, honor, and celebration.***

In the spirit of grandeur, SBU president Dr. C. Pat Taylor asked Dr. Ron Maupin to begin incorporating this rich tradition each fall during Welcome Week to mark the students' official induction into the university community, symbolizing the start of their academic journey with a sense of tradition and solemnity yearly at Welcome Week.

*“Having bagpipes play at both the start and conclusion of the students' academic journey symbolizes a sense of tradition and continuity. By incorporating this unique instrument, the commencement ceremony connects the graduates' journey full circle, from their first day of classes to their final achievement.”*

- Dr. Rick Melson, SBU President

# *Decorum*

## **ACADEMIC REGALIA**

The history of academic dress dates to the Medieval European universities of the 14th century. European universities continue to follow varied patterns in cut and color of gown and type of headdress. In the United States, the colleges and universities have standardized the academic dress so that its features are common and uniform throughout the country. The standard dress in the United States is as follows:

### **THE GOWN**

The color is usually black. The pattern varies with the degree held: square-cut sleeves for the bachelor's degree; and long, closed, sleeves with a slit for the arm for the master's and specialist's degrees. The doctoral gown is faced down the front with velvet and three bars across the sleeves.

### **THE HOOD**

Hoods are not worn for the undergraduate degrees. The master's hood is shorter than the specialist's hood, which is shorter than the doctoral hood. Hoods are lined with the colors of the school granting the degree, while the color of the binding or edging of the hood indicates the discipline in which the degree was attained.

### **THE STOLE**

All undergraduate students wear a stole. The stole bears the University seal and is crafted in purple and white, the University colors. The stole represents membership within the University body as a student and continuing on in the body of SBU alumni.

## **CORDS**

Solid-colored cords signify bachelor degree students graduating with honors. Summa Cum Laude (with highest honor), a grade point average of 3.85 and above, is represented with a gold cord. Magna Cum Laude (with great honor), a grade point average of 3.70 but less than 3.85, is represented with a silver cord. Cum Laude (with honor), a grade point average of 3.50 but less than 3.70, is represented with a bronze cord. The red, white, and blue cord represents those who have served or are presently serving in the United States Armed Forces. Blue and white cords indicate the graduate has secured employment with Mercy, our healthcare partner.

## **GORDON & JUDY DUTILE HONORS PROGRAM**

Students seeking bachelor degrees are selected to the Gordon & Judy Dutile Honors Program at admission to Southwest Baptist University based on their service, leadership, and scholarship. To graduate from the program, honors program students complete an enriched general education curriculum, as well as honors-specific courses and an Honors Capstone Project. Dutile Honors graduates are wearing a medallion with their regalia in recognition of their completion of the program.

*Commencement is a special event to honor all students who have earned a diploma after many years of hard work and dedication. The distinction of the college degree and of the academic community should be recognized. Please be mindful of the graduates and their families during the ceremony.*

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.**

# Commencement Ceremony

***Presiding: Dr. Richard Melson, Ph.D.,  
President of Southwest Baptist University***

**December 12, 2025**

Prelude .....	SBU Wind Symphony Mr. Stephen Mathews, Director
Call To Order .....	Dr. Duke Jones <i>Professor of Christian Ministry</i>
* Processional .....	Amanda Evans '02, '05 <i>Highland Bagpipes</i>
* Invocation .....	Mrs. Shellie Austin '17 <i>Director of University Libraries</i>
Instrumental Feature .....	<i>Crown Him with Many Crowns</i> ..... SBU Wind Symphony arr. James Swearingen Mr. Stephen Mathews
Video Presentation	
Welcome and Introductions .....	Dr. Rick Melson <i>President</i>
Senior Music .....	<i>A Mighty Fortress is Our God</i> ..... Senior Musicians arr. Curnow Abi Kincaid, Piano Caleb Smith, Tuba
Commencement Address .....	Dr. Rick Melson
Presentation of Class .....	Dr. Troy Bethards '93 <i>Associate Provost</i>
Presentation of Diplomas .....	Dr. Rick Melson Dr. Troy Bethards

\*Denotes time to stand

Alumni Induction .....	Leon Wirth '93
	<i>V.P. for Institutional Advancement</i>
* Alma Mater .....	Dr. Sarah Howes
	<i>Associate Professor of Music</i>
	<i>acc. SBU Symphony Band</i>
* Benediction .....	Dr. Rick Melson
** Recessional .....	<i>The Klaxon</i> ..... SBU Wind Symphony
	by Henry Fillmore <i>Mr. Stephen Mathews</i>

\*Denotes time to stand

\*\* Please wait for graduates and faculty to exit

# ***Candidates for Graduation***

## **ASSOCIATE DEGREES**

### ***Ed & Theo Clark University Success Center, Dr. Scotti Moats, Director***

Billie Jo Bunch	A.S.	General Studies
Raegan Grace Cowan	A.S.	General Studies
Isaiah Matthew Dusenberry	A.S.	General Studies
Landry Dean Hixson	A.S.	General Studies

### ***College of Health Professions, Dr. Brittney Hendrickson '08, '11, '12, Dean Division of Pre-Licensure Nursing, Dr. Renay McCarley, Head***

Irina Abney	A.S.N.	Nursing
Sherry Lyn Belt	A.S.N.	Nursing
Brandon M. Bray	A.S.N.	Nursing
Shayna Denai Chenoweth	A.S.N.	Nursing
Courtney M. Crain	A.S.N.	Nursing
Savannah Lynn Crossland	A.S.N.	Nursing
Alison Ann Davis	A.S.N.	Nursing
Kaitlin Rachelle Doherty	A.S.N.	Nursing
Eric Chance Dove	A.S.N.	Nursing
Alejandra J. Gonzalez	A.S.N.	Nursing
Allison Makaylee Graham	A.S.N.	Nursing
Kaylee Rae Hoffman	A.S.N.	Nursing
Armando Hurtado	A.S.N.	Nursing
Cami Celene Johnson	A.S.N.	Nursing
Rebecca Gail Marler	A.S.N.	Nursing
Bradley C. Nutter	A.S.N.	Nursing
Kemberley Rachelle Ochetti	A.S.N.	Nursing
Kaela Jae Peterson	A.S.N.	Nursing

Austin E. Presley	A.S.N.	Nursing
Tyler D. Reed	A.S.N.	Nursing
Mackenzie Lee Reeves	A.S.N.	Nursing
Julie A. Sikes	A.S.N.	Nursing
Camille Tricia Smith	A.S.N.	Nursing
Kelli Brianne Stalker	A.S.N.	Nursing
Davida Alexis Stepney	A.S.N.	Nursing
Traci Ladonn Turner	A.S.N.	Nursing
Allison Olivia Wells	A.S.N.	Nursing
Jasmine Marie Whaley	A.S.N.	Nursing
Haley Regan Wilson	A.S.N.	Nursing
Abbygail T. Wrinkle	A.S.N.	Nursing

*The inclusion of a student's name in the program does not guarantee the student is fully qualified to graduate.*

# ***Candidates for Graduation***

## **BACHELOR DEGREES**

### ***Geneva Casebolt College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Bill DuVall, Dean***

#### **Bob R. Derryberry Division of Humanities, Dr. Kwasi Ofori-Yeboah, Head**

Nathaniel S. Brigman	B.S.	Social Science Education
Joshua Anthony Courtois	B.S.	History/Christian Ministry
Benjamin J. Hines	B.S.	Political Science
Jeremiah P. Horn	B.S.	Media Studies
Allison Nicole Weaver	B.S.	Media Studies

#### **Courts Redford Division of Christian Ministry, Dr. Matt Kimbrough '08, Head**

Austin Bailey Fry	B.A.	Biblical Studies
Aidan M. Presley	B.A.	Church Ministry

#### **Division of the Arts, Dr. Kwasi Ofori-Yeboah, Head**

Megan Elizabeth Austin	B.S.	General Music
Abigail Rose Kincaid	B.S.	General Music
Caleb Mark Smith	B.M.	Music Education
Sarah Delia Grace Westercamp	B.M.	Music Education

#### **Division of Behavioral Sciences, Dr. Shelley Kilpatrick, Head**

Jaris Lander Acklin	B.S.	Sports Psychology
Ashlee K. Botkin	B.S.	Psychology
Jackson James Deal	B.S.	Psychology/Mathematics
Emily Marie Dutton	B.S.	Psychology
Michael Christopher Gee	B.S.	Psychology
Eric James Jackson	B.S.	Psychology
Joslyne Elizabeth Jensen	B.S.W.	Social Work
Chanda L. Martin	B.S.	Psychology

Elise Nicole McFarland	B.A.	Psychology
Nicole Michelle Puyear	B.S.	Psychology

**Division of Natural Sciences, Dr. Jena Whetstine, Head**

Bailey Bassham	B.S.	Exercise Science
Hannah Rose Brisley	B.S.	Biochemistry
Adaline Marie Colon	B.S.	Exercise Science
Grace Amelia Cram	B.S.	Exercise Science/Biblical Studies
Makaylin Romel Forbes	B.S.	Exercise Science
Emilee Elizabeth Gorrell	B.S.	Exercise Science
Zachary M. Warwick	B.S.	Exercise Science

**Robert W. Plaster College of Business, Dr. Troy Bethards '93, Dean**

**Division of Business, Dr. Nathan Wright '05, Head**

Jake Patterson Beets	B.S.	Business Management
Preston L. Brown	B.S.	Digital Marketing
Olivia Mae Crawford	B.S.	Business Management
Kori L. Cromer	B.S.	Digital Marketing
Ava Faith Deutschmann	B.S.	Marketing
Marcos Franjul-Flores	B.S.	Business Management
Roberto Garcia Banda	B.S.	Business Management
Alexander E. Jensen	B.S.	Global Business
Joshua P. Koranda	B.S.	Business Management
Avery Jacob Lambert	B.S.	Business Management
Iker Lorenzo Madinabeitia	B.S.	Economics/Finance
Devon J. McMillin	B.S.	Business Management
Zoie A. Myers	B.S.	Business Administration
Jared J. Pugrad	B.S.	Business Management
Ambyr L. Reese	B.S.	Business Administration
Naomi Kaye Sperduto	B.S.	Global Business/Biblical Studies

Clayton A. Young	B.S.	Marketing
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***College of Professional Programs, Dr. Troy Bethards '93, Dean***  
***Division of Computing and Mathematics, Dr. Amos Gichamba, Head***

Giovanni Battista Cascone	B.S.	Computer Science
Janelle Ashley McGee	B.S.	Cybersecurity
Elijah J. Immel	B.S.	Mathematics

***Division of Education, Dr. Julie Bryant '97, Head***

Alicia Marie Bartig	B.S.	Elementary Education
Emily Rose Burton	B.S.	Elementary Education
Zoe Rae Cook	B.S.	Elementary Education
Rylie S. Hardin	B.S.	Elementary Education
Autumn Jaylene Hogan	B.S.	Elementary Education
Jordan T. Kent	B.S.	Physical Education
Ella Rose Metcalf	B.S.	Elementary Education
Taylor Leann Pearman	B.S.	Elementary Education
Nautica Rose Smith Finley	B.S.	Elementary Education
Danielle Doris Stephens	B.S.	Elementary Education

***College of Health Professions, Dr. Brittney Hendrickson '08, '11, '12, Dean***  
***Division of Health Sciences and Post-Licensure Nursing, Dr. Cindy Todd, '07, '11, '13, Head***

Rachel Nicole Brown	B.S.N.	Nursing
Shelby R. Buckner	B.S.N.	Nursing
Victoria Marie Cortez	B.S.N.	Nursing
Emily Faith Ezzell	B.S.N.	Nursing
Antoinette Christine Haskins	B.S.N.	Nursing
Dallas Mae Hilton	B.S.N.	Nursing
Lauren M. Lohr	B.S.N.	Nursing
Gabrielle A. McArtor	B.S.N.	Nursing

Crystal Thu-An Nguyen	B.S.N.	Nursing
Lacy Jo Oparaocha	B.S.N.	Nursing
Sarah E. Reed	B.S.N.	Nursing
Abbey Kay Summa	B.S.	Health Sciences
Chelsey Renee Towe	B.S.N.	Nursing

*The inclusion of a student's name in the program does not guarantee the student is fully qualified to graduate.*

# ***Candidates for Graduation***

## **GRADUATE DEGREES**

***Geneva Casebolt College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Bill DuVall, Dean***

***Courts Redford Division of Christian Ministry, Dr. Matt Kimbrough '08, Head***

Alejandra Dos Santos	M.A.	Christian Ministry
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***College of Health Professions, Dr. Brittney Hendrickson '08, '11, '12, Dean***

***Division of Health Sciences and Post-Licensure Nursing, Dr. Cindy Todd, '07, '11, '13, Head***

Mercy Debrah Adom	M.S.N.	Nursing Education
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***Robert W. Plaster College of Business, Dr. Troy Bethards '93, Dean***

***Division of Business, Dr. Nathan Wright '05, Head***

Julianna Paige Lewis	M.B.A.	Marketing
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Canaan M. Mullins	M.B.A.	Management
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Gabriel M. Walls	M.B.A.	Management
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***College of Professional Programs, Dr. Troy Bethards '93, Dean***

***Division of Graduate Technology and Information Sciences, Dr. Kenneth George, Head***

Vivekananda Raman Eeday	M.S.	Artificial Intelligence
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Vishal Chetan Kumar Gajjar	M.S.	Computer Science
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***Division of Education, Dr. Julie Bryant '97, Head***

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

Julia Marie Cole	M.S.Ed.	Curriculum & Instruction
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Tyler Joseph Curts	M.S.Ed.	Athletic-Activity Director
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Samantha G. Deener	M.S.Ed.	Curriculum & Instruction
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Morgan Elaine Diffley	M.S.Ed.	Curriculum & Instruction
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Molly Kay Droney	M.S.Ed.	Curriculum & Instruction
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Jessica Kay Evans	M.S.Ed.	Curriculum & Instruction
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Breanna L. Goertz	M.S.Ed.	Curriculum & Instruction
Alexis Paige Kruse	M.S.Ed.	Literacy
Jayne Ann O'Brien	M.S.Ed.	Literacy
Chance Gary Pillar	M.S.Ed.	Athletic-Activity Director
Angela Surface	M.S.Ed.	Curriculum & Instruction
Kelsey Tobey	M.S.Ed.	Curriculum & Instruction
Raquel Valdez Mercado	M.S.Ed.	Athletic-Activity Director
Daniel Alexander Weathermon	M.S.Ed.	Athletic-Activity Director

#### EDUCATION SPECIALIST

Karen Lynn Bohannon	Ed.S.	Educational Administration
Tanner L. Corum	Ed.S.	Educational Administration
Glen Allen Johnson	Ed.S.	Educational Administration
Riley Noelle Keltner	Ed.S.	Educational Administration
Jessica Laine Kennedy	Ed.S.	Educational Administration
Orissa Odessa Ramirez	Ed.S.	Educational Administration
Carly A. Richter	Ed.S.	Educational Administration

#### DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

*(The title of each graduate's dissertation is in quotation marks.)*

Rebecca L. Ash	Ed.D.	Educational Leadership
"Educator Perception Shifts with Conscious Discipline"		
Carla Jo Barker	Ed.D.	Educational Leadership
"Secondary Traumatic Stress: The Impacon PK-12 Educators, Special Educators, and Administrators"		
Barie Elizabeth Krewson	Ed.D.	Educational Leadership
"Rural Educators' Experiences with Artificial Intelligence Education Tools: A Qualitative Narrative Study"		

Tony Nathan Warstadt

Ed.D.

Educational Leadership

“Uncertified Progressing Teacher Candidates’ First Year as Teachers of Record in Rural Missouri: A Qualitative Narrative Analysis”

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# Academic Leadership

## **PRESIDENT**

Dr. Richard Melson

## **PROVOST**

Dr. Tracy Manly

## **ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR ONLINE LEARNING**

Dr. Troy Bethards '93

## **ASSISTANT PROVOST FOR GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRANSITION**

Dr. Scotti Moats

## Deans

### **COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS**

Dr. Brittney Hendrickson '08, '11, '12

### **COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS ROBERT W. PLASTER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**

Dr. Troy Bethards '93

### **GENEVA CASEBOLT COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

Dr. Bill DuVall

# Commencement Marshals

## **FACULTY MARSHALS**

Dr. Duke Jones, Faculty Senate President  
Dr. Renay McCarley, Faculty Senate President-Elect

## **JUNIOR MARSHALS**

Allison Youngblood  
Trevor Johnson

### **LIVESTREAMING**

The Commencement Ceremony is livestreamed and available for viewing at a later date through this link:

[Fall 2025 Commencement Livestream](#)

### **PHOTOS**

Individual professional photos taken at each ceremony are provided by Grad Images. Images may be viewed and purchased by visiting [www.FindMyGrad.com](http://www.FindMyGrad.com).

