

MOUNT MARTY UNIVERSITY



COMMENCEMENT

APRIL 25, 2026

10:00 A.M.

WATERTOWN, SOUTH DAKOTA

2026 COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

PROCESSIONAL

Brian Ries, Organist

Led by Dr. April Moen '98

Adjunct Faculty

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

April Meyer '98, '07

Director of Admission - Watertown

NATIONAL ANTHEM

"The Star Spangled Banner"

by Francis Scott Key

INVOCATION

Lonnie Kleinsasser '26

WELCOME AND STUDENT AWARDS

Heidi Schooley '07

Director - Watertown

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

Dr. Melissa Meidinger

Regional Director, Small Business

Development Center

Adjunct Faculty

STUDENT SPEAKER

Ally Helle '26

SPECIAL MUSIC

Watertown High School

Arrow Choir

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES FOR DEGREES

Dr. William J. Miller

Provost

CONFERRING OF DEGREES

Dr. Mark Brown

President

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION WELCOME

Dr. April Moen '98

Adjunct Faculty

BENEDICTION

Lindsey Dorosh '25

RECESSIONAL

Brian Ries

Led by Dr. April Moen '98

It is customary for the audience to stand during the Processional, National Anthem, Invocation, Benediction and Recessional.

MOUNT MARTY PRAYER

O God,

Creator of all things and source of wisdom and knowledge, send your Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts, words, and actions so that everything we do will begin with your inspiration and continue with your guidance and blessing. Help us to speak and act with integrity so that we may uphold the values of Mount Marty University. May we use our talents and abilities in the best ways possible so that You may be glorified and our neighbor served.

We pray these things through Jesus, your Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN.

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

by Dr. Melissa Meidinger

With more than 25 years of experience in leadership development, higher education, and organizational effectiveness, Dr. Meidinger brings academic insight and practical expertise to every session. She currently serves as Regional Director of the Small Business Development Center in Watertown and teaches at Mount Marty University and the University of Sioux Falls. She is known for translating leadership theory into actionable strategies that drive real results.

At the core of her being, she believes that every person has greatness inside of them, and her life's work is helping people discover it. She is deeply passionate about inspiring and motivating others to grow, challenge the status quo, and live lives filled with purpose and meaning. For Melissa, the greatest reward in her work is hearing someone say, "You impacted me." She believes true success is not measured only by achievement, but by the positive difference we make in the lives of others.

At the center of Melissa's life are her three children, who are her greatest joy and inspiration. She strives to model for them the value of hard work, curiosity, kindness, and the courage to pursue a meaningful life. She hopes they grow up believing in their own potential, embracing life's adventures, and using their gifts to improve the lives of those around them. Melissa believes that life is ultimately about relationships, experiences, and leaving the world a little better than we found it—and she works every day to live that example for her children and the people she serves.

BACHELOR OF ARTS

ALEXIS ELIZABETH ALEXANDER

Business Administration
Brandon, SD
Magna Cum Laude

LINDSEY M. DOROSH*

Elementary Education
Wilmot, SD
Summa Cum Laude

BIANCA JEAN FONDER

Human Service
Watertown, SD
Magna Cum Laude

ALLISON GEFFRE

Psychology
Watertown, SD
Summa Cum Laude, Psi Chi

OLIVIA HANSEN

Accounting
Wheaton, MN
Summa Cum Laude

ARON HAUG

Business Administration
Sisseton, SD
Cum Laude

ALLY HELLE

Psychology
Watertown, SD
Magna Cum Laude, Psi Chi

RYDER M. JOHNSON*

Elementary Education
Castlewood, SD

LONNIE KLEINSASSER

Business Administration
Watertown, SD
Summa Cum Laude

HUNTER LEE

Accounting
Clark, SD
Summa Cum Laude

SHANTEL A. MACK

Psychology
Watertown, SD
Summa Cum Laude, Psi Chi

SHANTEL JEAN MATEJEK*

Elementary Education
Watertown, SD
Summa Cum Laude

JAHNA MARIE MEESTER*

Elementary Education
Watertown, SD
Summa Cum Laude

SAMUEL OLSON

Accounting
Watertown, SD
Summa Cum Laude

FRANCISCO ORTEGA

Accounting
Milbank, SD

SARAH PETERSEN

Psychology
Watertown, SD
Cum Laude

ROBBY POORE*

Psychology
Watertown, SD
Cum Laude

KATE-LYN REDLINGER

Psychology
Watertown, SD
Cum Laude, Psi Chi

BRITANIE NICOLE SANDER*

Business Administration

Gary, SD

Cum Laude

MIRANDA SCHLECHT

Elementary Education

Canby, MN

Cum Laude

SARAH ANN SCHAKE*

Business Administration

Castlewood, SD

Magna Cum Laude

ALEXIS ELIZABETH STINTON*

Technical Management

Castlewood, SD

Summa Cum Laude

GRADUATION HONORS AND NOTES

Graduation honors are awarded to students earning bachelor degrees in recognition of superior scholarship. Latin honors are based on December grade point average.

Summa Cum Laude is the honorary title used to signify those with a cumulative grade point average of 3.9 and is recognized by navy/gold honor cords.

Magna Cum Laude is the honorary title used to signify those with a cumulative grade point average of 3.7 and is recognized by gold/white honor cords.

Cum Laude is the honorary title used to signify those with a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 and is recognized by navy/white honor cords.

Psi Chi is the international honor society for psychology, which includes psychology and human service disciplines, recognized by a platinum/navy blue cord and platinum stole.

*** INDICATES DECEMBER 2025 GRADUATE**

Names listed in this publication and participation in the commencement exercises may not be construed as documentation of completion of degree requirements. Certification of the conferral of a degree is by official transcript noting degree completion.

ACADEMIC REGALIA

The tradition of academic costume has a history of nearly eight centuries. In medieval Europe, all townsmen wore long flowing robes or gowns. The materials and colors varied greatly, according to wealth and rank of the individual and were governed by royal decree. Gradually, distinctive gowns developed for the various professions, trades and guilds. This tradition survives today in gowns of religious orders, the judiciary and the academic regalia.

Most distinctive of the academic regalia is the hood, which identifies the graduate degree and the institution where the degree was awarded. The hood is lined with silk in the official colors of the institution. The velvet edging indicates the degree as follows:

Arts, Letters, Humanities: White

Commerce, Accountancy, Business: Drab

Education: Light Blue

Fine Arts: Brown

Music: Pink

Nursing: Apricot

Philosophy: Dark Blue

Physical Education: Sage Green

Science: Golden Yellow

Theology: Scarlet

MOUNT MARTY UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

Mount Marty University, an academic community in the Catholic Benedictine liberal arts tradition, prepares students for a contemporary world of work, service to the human community and personal growth.

MOUNT MARTY UNIVERSITY

Mount Marty University is a Catholic, Benedictine institution of higher learning founded in 1936 by the Sisters of Saint Benedict of Yankton, South Dakota. The institution is named in memory of Martin Marty, a Swiss monk, who came to the Dakota Territory in 1876 and became the territory's first Catholic bishop. As bishop, he invited the Benedictine Sisters to establish a religious community in South Dakota.

The university functioned as a junior college for women for 15 years; in 1951 it awarded its first Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees. In 1969, the college became coeducational. Associate of Arts degree programs were introduced in 1975 in areas compatible with already existing programs. Graduate study came to the institution with the first Master of Science degree being awarded in 1983, followed by the first Master of Art degree in 1999. The first doctorate in Nurse Anesthesia Practice was approved in 2016. Mount Marty University is the first private university in South Dakota to offer doctoral degrees.

Mount Marty University's main campus is located in Yankton, SD. There are two additional locations in Watertown, SD, and Sioux Falls, SD.

Mount Marty University-Watertown has been serving northeast South Dakota since 1972 and offers numerous undergraduate degrees in non-traditional formats. This non-residential learning environment offers flexible options that cater to all students and working professionals looking to enhance their lives and further their careers through higher education.

Sioux Falls is home to the Mount Marty Doctorate of Nurse Anesthesia Practice graduate program, a program that has been producing successful nurse anesthetists since 1942. This 36-month program prepares the next generation of advanced practice nursing professionals for commitment to excellence in clinical care, advancing the profession and service to the human community. The Sioux Falls location is also home to Mount Marty University's Master of Science in Biotechnology degree and the Master of Science in Regulatory Science degree, both the first such degrees in the state.

In keeping with the Benedictine tradition, the university exists as a community of learners. Primary emphasis is placed on the development of each person as a complete human being with intellectual competence; professional and personal skills; and a composite of moral, spiritual and social values.

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