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Commencement stories: Graduates reflect on their time as Lakers

BY [University Communications](#)

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Hannah Hosfelt: Commencement speaker says time at GVSU during pandemic fueled resilience, focus on 'small joys'



Hannah Hosfelt is earning a degree in elementary and special education.
Image credit - Cory Morse

Hannah Hosfelt will be graduating with a bachelor's degree in elementary and special education and giving this semester's student Commencement speech. Hosfelt started at Grand Valley during the pandemic, providing unique challenges.

"I think that Grand Valley has taught me resilience. Through the pandemic and having to navigate college, everyone was learning how to do life online," said Hosfelt.

Hosfelt found that starting college at the height of the pandemic was disheartening because all of her classes were held virtually. Her Commencement speech will focus on how she got through the pandemic and learned to find small joys daily.

"I started writing down something each day that made me happy and that compounded into something that I did all four years of college," Hosfelt said.

She encourages everyone to find a way to savor the little joys and take the time to celebrate the big ones. She believes that applying to provide the Commencement speech was a great way to share this message with other students.

The application process included a list of leadership opportunities, both inside and outside Grand Valley, a recommendation letter from a staff member, and a video of her giving her proposed speech. After being selected as a finalist, Hosfelt performed her speech in front of a panel on the Allendale Campus.

"I love public speaking," said Hosfelt. "But sometimes, I think it is really important to focus on things outside of the academic sphere."

After graduating, Hosfelt plans to pursue a master's degree in special education with an emphasis on Autism spectrum disorder. In high school, she volunteered in a Peer-to-Peer program and she wanted to make that her career.

"It also taught me empathy. Through the special education program, I have had a lot of experience getting to work with lots of different students. It has been really impactful to be able to put myself into other people's shoes and practice that empathy out in the real world," said Hosfelt.

– *By Samantha Drougel*

Moesha Jones: An early class inspired her 'aha moment,' shaping the rest of her time at Grand Valley



Moesha Jones is earning a degree graduating in women, gender and sexuality studies.
Image credit - Kendra Stanley-Mills

Moesha Jones is graduating with a bachelor's degree in women, gender and sexuality studies. After taking a first-year Introduction to Gender Studies class, she was hooked.

“It’s just very interesting,” Jones said. “We were talking about minorities and disadvantaged people; we were talking about people with disabilities. I loved it and was like, 'What if I just make this my major?' I don't think there's been one WGS class that I did not like.”

That introductory class opened doors for her, Jones said, eventually bringing her to her current job as a front desk worker at the Milton E. Ford LGBT Center. The position is one of many she’s had as a student putting herself through college, and she’s considering working at a nonprofit with a similar mission to the LGBT Center after graduation.

While working multiple jobs limited some of her opportunities in school, Jones has still been involved in a wide variety of student organizations, including Uniting Nations, which brings international students together to find community and learn more about American culture.

“My old roommate was actually the president of it,” Jones said. “So I got roped in and thought it was really fun.”

In addition to Uniting Nations, Jones has also been involved in KPop Evolution, Black Excellence and Black Student Union. “Being at a PWI, it’s really nice and refreshing to find other people within the same community as me that share the same culture,” she said.

Jones has also received multiple scholarships throughout her time at Grand Valley and was this year’s recipient of the [Jean Enright Scholarship](#), which awards WGS students demonstrating a commitment to gender equity in their community and on campus.

“A lot of people applied, and for me to get it and have my professor present the award, that was really big,” said Jones.

The faculty members in her program are another big reason for why she chose it. She especially credits Ayana Weekley, associate professor, who taught that initial Introduction to Gender Studies class and others that Jones has taken since.

“Dr. Weekley is super sweet and very encouraging,” said Jones. “She pushes me anytime I want to be lazy or slack a little bit in class. If no one wants to answer, she'll just pick me and be like, 'I know you have something to say about this.' She definitely gets me out of my shell.”

As her time at Grand Valley comes to an end, Jones has learned how to deal with a hectic schedule and balancing jobs, classes and everything else – though it took awhile.

If she could give one piece of advice to newer students, Jones said it would be simple: Ask for help when you need it.

“You do not have to do it all by yourself,” she said. “Whether it's for academics or social problems or whatever, just ask for help and take care of yourself.”

– *By Julianna Schrier*

Felipe Nogueira Pozzi de Miranda: Work with Michigan Small Business Development Center provided crucial experience, direction



Felipe Nogueira Pozzi de Miranda is earning degrees in business economics and general management.

Image credit - Macayla Cramer

Felipe Nogueira Pozzi de Miranda said he was unsure about living in the state of Michigan when he first applied to international programs.

“It is just a roll of the dice, and you plan to make the best of it no matter what, but over the years it really has become my home, and I wouldn’t have it any other way,” said Miranda.

Miranda, an international student from São Paulo, Brazil, will graduate this fall with an undergraduate degree in both business economics and general management with a minor in international business.

After a tough first year, Miranda made a transition to business economics and found his turning point in gaining a position with the Michigan Small Business Development Center (SBDC), located at the Seidman College of Business.

“It was at the SBDC and within the College of Business that I felt surrounded by people who are trying to help build up these small businesses and I think it was that adversity that pushed me to step up and take some responsibility for myself and my education,” said Miranda.

Now, after spending over two years at the Michigan SBDC, Miranda has interacted with hundreds of businesses throughout the West Michigan community. He handles the intake for clients and helps them get connected with services like one-on-one professional counseling, marketing research, and workshops/training.

Since 2023, Miranda has also been a part of LendGR at Grand Valley, a technical assistance program offered by the Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation, where students like Miranda apply their education to provide small businesses with up to 25 hours of free services like flow analysis, business planning and assistance with acquiring funding.

“My time at both the SBDC and LendGR have provided me with tons of career experience, amazing mentors, and the interpersonal skills that helped me acquire a position for after I graduate this fall,” said Miranda. “I am truly grateful for this program and how it has helped me grow.”

In the new year, Miranda will be starting a position at Total Quality Logistics, beginning with a 26-week long training program where he will learn the details of the logistics industry, sales and negotiation skills.

– *By Thomas Garrett*

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