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# Army official urges UWF grads to turn aspirations into reality

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Action is everything.

Continuous learning is critical and goal-setting and selfless service are keys to a successful future.

Those four ideas were part of an overall message Maj. Gen. Gale Pollock delivered Saturday to nearly 1,500 University of West Florida graduates.

Pollock, commander of the U.S. Army Medical Command and acting Army surgeon general, served as UWF's 69th commencement guest speaker at two separate events. One was at the Pensacola Civic Center for undergraduate students; the second was for graduate students at the school's field house.

"Action is everything and is perhaps the most outwardly identifiable characteristic of a successful person," said Pollock, who also is chief of the Army Nurse Corps. "By taking specific action, you're able to turn your goals and aspirations into reality."

Pollock also told the students that though they have graduated, they must recognize that learning is continuous.

"School is never out for a professional," said Pollock, who has master's degrees from Baylor, Boston and the National Defense universities.

"You must commit to getting better and better in the important things that you do and you will achieve, based on the depth of your foundation of knowledge and skill," she said.

Pollock went on to implore the students to set goals and make plans for their future accomplishments, pointing out that "a person with clear goals -- written down -- who works on them every day, will run circles around a genius who is unsure and uncertain about what he or she really wants."

Pollock, a fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives, also spoke of the importance of public service.

"We're placed on this earth to be useful in some way, and we're only happy when we feel, deep inside, that what we're doing is somehow helping others in a positive way," Pollock said.

Dedra Wiggins graduated Saturday from UWF with a bachelor's degree in social work. She plans to heed Pollock's message, particularly when it comes to continuous learning and the need to serve the public.

"I'm in agreement with those who believe that one can never stop learning," said Wiggins, who works at Families Count, a local nonprofit organization that works to diagnose, treat and prevent child abuse and neglect.

She plans to take a year off before going back to school to pursue a master's degree.

With a master's degree in hand, "I'm going to look at what I can do to help make my community a better place," the

Maj. Gen. Gale Pollock, commander of the U.S. Army Medical Command and acting Army surgeon general, speaks to the crowd Saturday morning during the UWF Commencement at the Pensacola Civic Center.

**John Blackie**  
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### PJC, PCC UP NEXT

Pensacola Junior College's spring commencement begins at 6 p.m. Monday at the Pensacola Civic Center, 201 E. Gregory St.

Gulf Power Co. president and CEO Susan Story is the speaker.

Pensacola Christian College's graduation ceremony is 9:30 a.m. Wednesday in the Crown Center on the campus, 250 Brent Lane.

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Pensacola native said.

As he walked off stage Saturday, David Bryan knew he had found the right career. He was among 21 students who graduated with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering.

"My plans for the future involve doing something of valuable service to my country," said Bryan, who is eyeing the nuclear technology field.