



Contact: Bill Jenkins
602.315.5566

Grand Canyon University's Eclectic Commencement is a Sign of the Times *Sextuplets, Native Americans and Pro Soccer Player Highlight Ceremonies*

PHOENIX (May 5, 2008) – The graduates of Grand Canyon University (GCU) who were honored at a commencement ceremony held last Saturday at Jobing.com Arena represent the changing face of higher education. The school graduated 3,121 students, among them a contingency of older Native Americans, a professional soccer player and an honorary degree for a well-known Valley resident. Nearly three-quarters of the graduates received degrees in education, and 80 percent completed their degrees online.

“One of our strengths is the ability accommodate the special requirements of the modern-day student. In today’s world it is important to make higher education as accessible as possible, and through the many stories that we discovered in this year’s graduating class it’s clear that we’re on the cutting edge of doing exactly that,” said CEO Brent Richardson.

GCU is one of the few universities in the country that successfully marries a strong, traditional on-ground student community with an online curriculum that enables both on-ground students and working professionals to complete their degrees, as was evidenced this year by the diverse group of graduates to walk through ceremonies.

A special appearance by Arizona’s own Masche sextuplets highlighted ceremonies, with all six 11-month-olds appearing in GCU white caps and gowns. As a special gift to the family, when the babies were born the school awarded the children with full-ride scholarships and gave the family a GCU van adorned with “Class of 2029.”

Among the more interesting groups of graduates were eight Native Americans from the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community in Arizona, all over the age of 50 (one at 72), eight graduating with master’s degrees in leadership and one with a bachelor’s degree. All walked through ceremonies with special tribal ribbons in addition to their purple caps and gowns.

Demonstrating GCU’s ability to accommodate various needs of students, one of its former star soccer players, David Hague, walked through ceremonies with his entire family from England watching from the stands. Hague was drafted to play for the Portland Timbers professional soccer team after having scored more goals than any other NCAA Division school during his final year playing at GCU, in 2006. Since he was drafted to play professionally before completing his degree, he was able to complete his studies online and received an undergraduate degree this year in Business Administration from the Ken Blanchard College of Business.

Harvey Mackay, well-known author, business consultant and founder of Mackay Envelope, received an honorary doctorate degree from Ken Blanchard, namesake of the Ken Blanchard College of Business at GCU and leader of the Ken Blanchard Executive MBA program. Mackay has been an integral part of the success of the Ken Blanchard EMBA program, serving on the program’s advisory committee and participating in co-horts, providing first-hand guidance and feedback to students enrolled in the program. Mackay is a part-time resident of Scottsdale.

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Of the total number of graduates, 2,572 students received graduate degrees and 549 received undergraduate degrees. GCU's College of Education graduated the most students with a total of 2,199 graduate and undergraduate degrees. The College of Nursing and Health Sciences had 418 graduates and the College of Liberal Arts had 61. The Ken Blanchard College of Business rounded out the total with 443 graduates.

About Grand Canyon University

Founded in 1949, Grand Canyon University is one of Arizona's leading higher learning institutions. Based in Phoenix, the regionally accredited, private, non-denominational Christian university offers online and campus-based bachelor's and master's degree programs through the Ken Blanchard College of Business, College of Education, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, and College of Liberal Arts. The school is ranked as one of the top online education programs by OEDb (Online Education Database) and as one of the top five online colleges for entrepreneurs by *Fortune*. With a total enrollment of approximately 15,000 students, GCU emphasizes individual attention for both traditional undergraduate students as well as the working professional. For more information visit www.gcu.edu.

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