

NEWS RELEASE

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UW-Stout inspiring graduate Kristen Ziegler ‘living the dream’ as program director at Blackhawk Technical College

DeForest native continues education to ‘teach the next generation of dental professionals’

[Kristen Ziegler's inspiring graduate Q&A](#)

[Additional inspiring graduate Q&As](#)

Photos attached

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 13, 2023

Menomonie, Wis. – For years, Kristen Ziegler dreamed of obtaining her [master’s in career and technical education](#), with a goal of teaching in a post-secondary setting. But as an educator, wife and mom, she knew she needed a program that was fully online and affordable.

“Now, I’m living the dream as a program director and educator of CTE at Blackhawk Technical College,” said Ziegler, who graduated from UW-Stout with her master’s in CTE on Dec. 17.

Ziegler, of DeForest, graduated with her associates degree in dental hygiene at the age of 21 and never thought she’d return to the classroom. She worked in the industry for 17 years.

“I knew I had a greater purpose and began my journey of obtaining my bachelor's degree and now, my master's degree. Nearing 40, with a total of 11 years as a college student, my educational journey has never ended and will continue to grow as I lead and teach the next generation of dental professionals,” Ziegler said.

“During my time at UW-Stout, I have had to wear many hats and find the balance to be successful. One of the most important hats we will wear is our graduation hat, which represents the sacrifice, dedication and commitment needed to have the honor of wearing it. A great education is possible, and our journey is never done,” she added.

How has your time at Stout added to your professional experience?

The professors in UW-Stout's [School of Education](#) were amazing and wanted their students to succeed.

Many of the courses in my program were required by the college I teach at, and I was able to obtain dual credit from the courses I took at Stout to count toward my professional development.

What was the online program like for you?

The MSCTE program was a well-developed online program already in place pre-pandemic.

I found comfort in my education during these trying times and found it was a secure and comfortable outlet.

I stayed organized, motivated and accountable for my own educational experience. When the world was uncertain during the pandemic, my education was not. In fact, being an online student during these trying times provided me with stability when everything around us was unpredictable.

What are you most proud of as you finish your degree?

What I am most proud of is that I proved to myself that obtaining my master's degree was possible while juggling the needs of my family and career. I completed graduate school with a 4.0 grade point average over five years, taking one class per semester. While it took me longer, the pace allowed me to succeed and avoid student loan debt. This was truly a dream in the making. As I close out my 11th year as a college student and third degree, I know my educational journey isn't over. Rather, it is just blossoming.

UW-Stout is [Wisconsin's Polytechnic University](#), with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes. Learn more via the [FOCUS2030](#) strategic plan.

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Photos

Kristen Ziegler receives her master's hood at commencement on Dec. 17.

Kristen Ziegler and Chancellor Katherine Frank.