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**DSU celebrates 416 degrees at Spring Commencement**

**CLEVELAND, Miss. —** **May 9, 2025 —** Delta State University proudly celebrated the achievements of its Spring 2025 graduates during commencement exercises held Friday, May 9, at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. in Walter Sillers Coliseum. The ceremonies honored 416 candidates for degrees, including 255 bachelor’s degrees, 128 master’s degrees, 28 educational specialist degrees, and 5 doctoral degrees.

Delta State President Dr. Daniel J. Ennis welcomed the assembled graduates, families, faculty, and distinguished guests, saying, “Every day is a great day at Delta State University, and I know our degree candidates will remember this day in particular.”

As part of the morning ceremony, DSU student Mary Parsons led the national anthem, while student Johnathan Denton performed the anthem at the afternoon event.

Ennis presented the S. E. Kossman Outstanding Teacher Award to Dr. Lisa Cooley, Assistant Professor of Marketing, and the H. L. Nowell Outstanding Support Staff Award to Sheila Millican, Aerial Applicator Program Coordinator.

Cleveland Mayor and Delta State alumnus Billy Nowell delivered the commencement address. A 1972 graduate, Nowell shared heartfelt memories of growing up in Cleveland and his lasting connection to Delta State. “Cleveland and Delta State have meant so much to me,” he said. “This city beats with the heartbeat of Delta State University.”

Encouraging graduates to embrace their journey and roots, Nowell added, “Always remember that success isn’t where you wind up, it’s how you walk the path. Be kind, be bold, lift others up, and never forget where you came from. This city will be cheering you on, no matter where your life takes you.”

During the afternoon ceremony, Delta State University conferred honorary doctoral degrees upon two distinguished individuals: former U.S. Congressman David R. Bowen and Reverend Wheeler Parker, Jr.

Bowen, a Cleveland native, has had a distinguished career in public service and higher education. He has been a dedicated advocate for the transformative power of education and economic development.

Parker, a Mississippi native and cousin of Emmett Till, has spent his life in ministry and public service. As the last living eyewitness to the events surrounding Till’s murder, he has shared his powerful story nationwide, promoting justice and reconciliation. Reverend Parker has generously collaborated with Delta State on numerous educational and cultural initiatives.

President Ennis emphasized the significance of the honorary degrees: “Delta State University confers honorary doctoral degrees for outstanding scholarly work, distinguished leadership or service, significant accomplishments, or exceptional philanthropic support. Today, we pay tribute to two outstanding candidates.”

Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Trustee and Delta State alumnus Jerry Griffith brought greetings and officially authorized the conferring of degrees.

After graduates crossed the stage to receive their diplomas, Dr. Ennis conferred the degrees, subject to final certification by the Registrar’s Office. He then welcomed Alumni Association Board President Hayes Collins to the podium.

“You have had family help get you to this achievement today,” said Collins. “And you have now gained a new family through the Delta State Alumni Association to go with you on this next journey you are setting out on.”

Delta State University extends its heartfelt congratulations to the Class of Spring 2025 and looks forward to their continued success as proud alumni of the Green and White.

For more information about degree programs at Delta State University, visit [deltastate.edu](https://www.deltastate.edu/). To view a recording of the live stream of the commencement ceremonies, visit [vimeo.com/deltastateuniversity](https://vimeo.com/deltastateuniversity).

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**About Delta State University:**Delta State University is a four-year public institution whose nearly 2,700 students come from most U.S. states and more than 45 countries. Acknowledging its beginning as a teacher’s college, the University sustains excellence in teacher education while continuing to expand offerings in traditional as well as unique fields of study. Programs such as those available through the Delta Music Institute, the Commercial Aviation Department, and the Center for Interdisciplinary Geospatial Information highlight the University’s commitment to meeting the evolving needs of the students it serves with world-leading, industry-acclaimed programs. Situated in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, Delta State offers top-notch academic programs in business, arts, sciences, nursing, education, and more. DSU Athletics has won 14 national championships, 70 conference championships, and 37 regional titles.