INDIANA UNIVERSITY KOKOMO

News Release

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May 2, 2012

Graduate recovers from brain tumor to earn degree

KOKOMO, Ind. — If Sarah Tweed listened to her doctors, she would not be graduating from Indiana University Kokomo Tuesday. (May 8)

Tweed had a brain tumor the size of a baseball removed in May 2011, and doctors advised her to take at least the fall semester off from school. Instead, she focused on recovering during the summer months and returned to IU Kokomo in August.

“If I had waited, I don’t think I would have gone back,” Tweed said. “I needed to go back for my self-satisfaction, and to prove to myself I could still read and remember.”

She is grateful for the support she received at IU Kokomo.

“Anybody and everybody was welcoming and helpful,” she said. “I was nervous when I came back, but my professors were patient and understanding.”

Chancellor Michael Harris said Tweed is an example of what a student can do when she is determined to overcome hurdles.

“Sarah is a role model and an inspiration,” he said. “She shows you can overcome challenges and succeed. What an amazing experience she had, and she handled it with so much grace and determination. I congratulate her on her recovery and graduation.”

Tweed was nearing the end of her junior year when she learned she had the brain tumor, during treatment for a broken leg she suffered in roller derby. She completed two of her classes, then had surgery at IU Methodist Hospital to remove the tumor.

She had a seizure during surgery, which left her unable to speak. A second seizure after the surgery took her right-side mobility.

Tweed spent a few weeks in in-patient rehabilitation, then came home to Galveston, where her father drove her to daily therapy in Kokomo. She slowly regained her speaking ability and use of her right side.

When she returned to IU Kokomo, Tweed still had to use her left hand instead of her right, because her dominant right hand was still weak. She started with one eight-week class as a transition, then took 12 credit hours during the spring semester.

“I think taking the one class fall semester is one of the best decisions I made through my recovery,” Tweed said. “I had to adapt to using my left hand and to having to work a little harder to recall what I learned. I don’t think I could have done it if I had gone from no classes to a full load. I was still thinking about being able to graduate in May 2012.”

After Commencement, she wants to go to graduate school to be a speech therapist, inspired by those who helped her overcome a speech impediment after her surgery.

“It’s really been on my heart to help others who are going through what I have been through,” Tweed said. “I know how kids feel with a speech impediment, because I can actually say I’ve been there.”

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