

## SLCC graduates its largest class

By Sheena McFarland  
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Posted: 3:46 PM- Albassis Albassis Ater came to the United States in 2001 knowing no English.

The Sudanese refugee went to Salt Lake City's Horizonte High School and earned a diploma, then found his way to Salt Lake Community College, where he graduated Friday with an associate's degree in criminal justice.

"This is a good day, a beautiful day," said Ater, who hopes to graduate from Weber State University in 2008 and plans to attend law school. "I'm happy because I couldn't communicate with English speakers before, and now I can."

Ater was one of more than 3,000 graduates who made up the largest class ever to graduate from SLCC. The size ranked the school seventh out of more than 1,200 community colleges across the nation.

That number makes President Cynthia Bioteau proud.

"Some of you are going into the work force, others of you will pursue a higher education and others will return to your neighborhoods and families," she said. "But all of you are thinking differently and broadly and you're going to go out and make a difference."

Emily DeRocco, assistant secretary for employment and training in the U.S. Department of Labor, echoed those sentiments.

"It is a time when big ideas are being turned into big results, and for you as individuals to seize the opportunities out there, you need a higher education and specialized skills," she said. "I truly envy the opportunities that lie before you, and Salt Lake Community College has equipped you with the skills to pursue those opportunities."

Graduates Rosandy Saavedra and Karen Romero both said SLCC was the most convenient place to obtain their associate's degrees before the two earn bachelor's degrees at the University of Utah.

"This was the best location and price," Romero said. "It was one of the best decisions I've made."

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