2023 May Commencement
Frequently Asked Questions

Commencement is a special time for our graduates, their families, friends, and the University of Tampa community. In order for your Commencement Day to be perfect please review the following frequently asked questions below:

What is the difference between graduation and commencement?

Graduation is the completion of all degree requirements in order to be awarded your degree and receive your printed diploma. Commencement is the symbolic ceremony at which your graduation is publicly acknowledged and celebrated. Participation in the commencement ceremony does not equate to graduating.

Where and when is commencement?

The May Commencement ceremony will be held on Saturday, May 6, 2023 in the Expo Hall, Florida State Fairgrounds.

- Graduates from the Sykes College of Business and the College of Arts and Letters will participate in the 9:30 a.m. ceremony.
- Graduates from the College of Social Sciences, Mathematics, and Education and the College of Natural and Health Sciences will participate in the 2 p.m. ceremony.

I graduate in August 2023. Can I attend this ceremony?

August graduation candidates are eligible to attend the May before or December after their degree is conferred and are able to select their preference. Please see the Commencement Application for more information.

When can I pick up my cap and gown?

All students who pre-ordered their cap and gown will be able to pick up their regalia on the second floor of the University Bookstore Monday, April 17 through Thursday, April 20 from 9 am - 6 pm and Friday, April 21 from 9 am - 4 pm.

In order to pick up regalia for themselves or another student on their behalf Spartan IDs are required. Cap and gown pick up after Friday, April 21 will occur during the University Bookstore's normal business hours on the first floor.

If a student did not pre-order their cap and gown by the deadline they will be served on a first-come, first-serve basis. Please note sizing may be limited if a pre-order was not completed. It is recommended these students visit the University Bookstore starting Monday, April 17.

What time do I need to arrive to commencement?

Morning Ceremony - Graduates should plan to arrive to check-in for the ceremony between 8:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. Graduates are required to check-in for the ceremony wearing your cap, gown and hoods no later than 9:15 a.m. for the ceremony. Graduates who arrive after 9:15 a.m.

will not be seated until after the start of the ceremony at the conclusion of the singing of the National Anthem. *

Please note that family members and guests are not permitted in the graduate check-In area.

Afternoon Ceremony - Graduates should plan to arrive to check-in for the ceremony between 12:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m. Graduates are required to check-in for the ceremony wearing your cap, gown and hoods no later than 1:45 p.m. for the ceremony. Graduates who arrive after 1:45 p.m. will not be seated until after the start of the ceremony at the conclusion of the singing of the National Anthem.

Please note that family members and guests are not permitted in the graduate check-In area.

Please try on your cap and gown as soon as you pick it up to make sure it fits before arriving to the fairgrounds. It will take about 20 minutes to pick up your "reader name" card, receive brief instructions and line up for pre-seating. Throughout the check-in process, it is imperative that you follow the instructions of the faculty marshals, staff and University of Tampa Diplomats who are organizing the event. Be patient and understanding.

What is pre-seating?
Graduating candidates will be seated prior to the start of the processional. Candidates will be seated by faculty marshals after they have completed the check-in process and have received their reader card. If candidates would like to sit with a particular group of people, all individuals must be present at the same time in order to sit together. Once candidates have been seated, they must remain in their seats for the duration of the ceremony.

When does pre-seating end?
Pre-seating ends at 9:15 a.m. for the morning ceremony and 1:45 p.m. for the afternoon ceremony. After that time we will hold seating graduates in order to ensure the processional begins on time. Graduates who arrive after this time will be seated following the singing of the National Anthem.

How long will the ceremony last?
At precisely 9:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. the Commencement music will begin to play and the processional will begin. The ceremonies are expected to last about 3 hours.

When will I receive my diploma?
At the ceremony, you will receive your diploma cover. Your diploma will be mailed to you in the summer, once all grades have been received and the Registrar's Office has conferred you have completed your degree requirements.

Please make sure to update your mailing address with the university via Workday to ensure you receive your diploma.

Do my family members and guests need tickets to attend?
Tickets are not required for family members or guests to attend either ceremony. However, due to limited seating, it is highly recommended that family members and guests arrive early at the Florida State Fairgrounds.

What time should my family and guests arrive? Is there assigned seating?
It is important that your families and friends be seated prior to the processional. No one can be seated during the processional. Please let your guests know this in advance. Seats cannot be reserved for other guests and seats are available on a first-come basis.

Is accessible seating available?
Accessible seating is available for family members and guests who may require this accommodation. Please note, to accommodate all those in need, family members and guests who need accessible seating may only have ***one companion*** sit with them during the ceremony in both the section on the floor (no stairs) and the lower stadium seating (one to two steps).

Please seek a University of Tampa Diplomat Student (Red Jacket) upon arrival to be directed to the accessible seating sections.

What do I need to wear to commencement?
Graduating candidates are required to wear the traditional cap, gown, and hood (if applicable). There will be no exceptions. Students can pick up their caps and gowns from the University Bookstore starting Monday, April 17, 2023.

How will students be recognized?
Graduates will be recognized individually. The students will stand by row and be led up the aisle by the faculty marshals. They will proceed to the left side of the stage (from the audience vantage point), pick up their diploma cover and hand the card they were given to the reader for their name to be announced. Students will then walk across the stage as a photographer takes their pictures. Students will then continue off the platform to the right for two more professional photos, and return to their seats.

How will I know that the ceremony is over?
At the conclusion of the ceremony, University administrators and faculty will recess first out of the Expo Hall into the Entertainment Hall. After the faculty has recessed, you will exit the Expo Hall through the family and guest entrance doors that will lead to the outside. Once outside there will be signs with “meeting zones” that have specific letters assigned to each. Please make prior arrangements on where you want to meet your family and guests outside the Expo Hall following the ceremony in one of the zones.

What is the etiquette expected at the ceremony?
All graduating students are required to remain seated throughout the duration of the ceremony. Please tell your family and friends that all guests must remain in their seats until the platform party, faculty and graduates have processed off the floor. Students and their

families/friends should designate a meeting place outside the Expo Hall before entering the building.

What items may I as well as my family and guests bring to the ceremony?

For the safety and security of all graduates and guests, please see below for permitted and prohibited items. Please note, security has the right to inspect any item at any time on the basis of safety. All graduates and guests will pass through security gates and a bag check upon entrance to the Expo Hall at the Florida State Fairgrounds. Prohibited items must immediately be returned to the owner's vehicle or disposed of before entering the commencement venue. Failure to do so will result in being denied admittance to the ceremony.

Should individuals, including graduating students, display disruptive behavior or be found in possession of any of these items, they may be immediately removed from the venue and denied access from participating in the ceremony.

The Florida State Fairgrounds is an alcohol, tobacco and drug free venue.

Permitted Items:

- Purses and small bags with personal belongings
- Necessary medications
- Umbrellas
- Cameras and video recorders
- Strollers
- Service animals

Prohibited Items:

- Weapons
- Beverages of any kind – including alcoholic beverages
- Glass containers
- Backpacks
- Tobacco products of any kind
- Noisemakers
- Laser pointers
- Non-service animals
- Balloons
- Banners
- Signage

*Please note: While strollers are permitted into the commencement venue, guests must leave the strollers at the designated stroller check location. The University of Tampa is not responsible for strollers or any items left at the stroller check location.

What are the driving directions to the Expo Hall, Florida State Fairgrounds?

The Florida State Fairgrounds is located at 4800 U.S. Highway 301 North in Tampa. From the University, travel on I-275 North toward I-4/Orlando and merge onto I-4 East via Exit 45B. Turn right into the Fairgrounds entrance. Do NOT go past the light at Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

Please note there is no fee for parking and disability parking is available with the appropriate hangtags.

Additionally, please take proper precautions for Tampa traffic and leave with plenty of time to arrive at the Fairgrounds.

Where should my family and guests park?
Parking attendants will guide you and your family members and guests to the appropriate parking lots when you arrive to the Florida State Fairgrounds.

What if I, or one of my guests, need special accommodations?
Graduates who need accommodations for the ceremony should indicate that when they apply for commencement with their needs and contact information so the commencement staff can make the necessary arrangements. The commencement office asks that you contact our office to make us aware of these needs as early as possible.

What if I have additional questions regarding the ceremony?
Please contact Orientation and Family Engagement at commencement@ut.edu or 813.257.1999. Our office is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. We are happy to help!