

UNIVERSITY OF SAINT FRANCIS

COMMENCEMENT INFORMATION

GENERAL INFO: USF holds one commencement annually; Commencement is always the first Saturday of May.

- Commencement is a celebration of degree conferral for degree earners who complete their curriculum September through August of the same academic year as the ceremony. The ceremony celebrates degrees from associate to doctorate. Students earning only certificates do not participate in the commencement ceremony.
 - Academic programs or divisions may hold smaller ceremonies before commencement for special recognition and pinning. Often, special cords will be distributed at these ceremonies.
- Deadlines may be found [online](#). After reviewing this entire document and the website, additional questions about the commencement ceremony may be directed to Alison Rynearson, Registrar, at 260-399-7700 x6527 or registrar@sf.edu.
- **The Graduation Application:** (Colleague Self-Service > Graduation Overview) should have been completed by February 28. A separate application is required for each degree being earned, so those earning two or three degrees need to fill out the application multiple times. The Graduation Application is the form that allows a student's courses to be audited by the Registrar's Office, and then to confer the degree. The form does not register attendance for the graduation ceremony. Registration is not needed to attend Baccalaureate Mass or Commencement. Those who do not complete the Graduation Application by the February 28 deadline, might not have their name printed in the commencement program, but can still attend all graduation-related events. Questions about the Graduation Application can be directed to the Registrar's Office at 260-399-7700 Ext. 6527 or registrar@sf.edu.
- **Cap and Gown (Regalia) Orders:** also have a deadline early in the spring semester, with pick-up at the bookstore a few weeks before graduation. Those who missed the ordering deadline or received incorrect materials may contact the campus bookstore (sf@slingshotedu.com, 260-399-8075). There is a regalia FAQ website available [online](#). A bookstore representative will be at the commencement ceremony check-in to solve last-minute issues.

MASS BEFORE COMMENCEMENT: Baccalaureate Mass (for all graduating students and their families, not just bachelor's degree earners) kicks off the day before commencement day.

- It is at the North Campus Auditorium located on campus.
- Students should wear their graduation attire (caps, gowns, hoods, cords) and arrive at 4:30 p.m. EST, 30 minutes before the start of the 5 p.m. EST service. Registration is not required for students.
- Students will line up in the NC gym for the processional.
- Mass will be immediately followed by an hors d'oeuvres reception where graduates and families are invited to celebrate their accomplishments with university administration, faculty, and staff.
- More information may be found [online](#).
- There is no limit on the number of guests that may attend. Registration is not required for graduates or guests.

COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY: Commencement is at the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum (4000 Parnell Avenue, Fort Wayne, Indiana)

- **Arrival:** Students should arrive at the glass doors at the top of the escalators near the main entrance between 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. EST for check-in, paperwork, and line-up. No pre-registration is required to attend commencement.
- **Guest Arrival:** Arena doors open to guests at 12:30 p.m. EST. The ceremony begins at 2:00 p.m. EST. There is no limit to the number of guests that can attend. There is no registration requirement for guests.
- **Student Special Needs:** Students with specific needs (e.g., elevator use, escort/guide) should contact Alison Rynearson, Registrar, at 260-399-7700 x6527 or registrar@sf.edu at least two weeks in advance to coordinate assistance and preview maps of the Coliseum.
- **Guest Special Needs:** On commencement day, family members with specific needs (e.g., handicapped seating, hearing assistance devices, or deaf interpreters) can be assisted by Coliseum ushers. Sign language interpreters will be stationed on the right side of the stage.
- **Parking:** Coliseum parking is \$8 per standard vehicle for students and their guests. The parking booths accept cash, debit, and credit cards. Parking fees are for single entry. The Coliseum parking lot is quite large, and it may be a long walk to reach the check-in destination.
- **Guest Seating:** Facing the stage, bachelor's degree candidates will sit on the left side of the arena. Doctoral, master's, and associate degree candidates will sit on the right side of the arena. Students will line up on the left side of the stage and cross the stage from left to right. Guests will need this information to determine on which side of the arena to sit.
- **Shoes:** Between line-up, the processional, the ceremony, and the recessional, students will be standing for about 2½ hours. Comfortable shoes are wise. Students could change into preferred footwear about 15 minutes before entering the arena. Temporary footwear should be disposable as there is nowhere to safely store it. Please consider wearing sensible shoes. Some might want to pick up a pair of \$1 flipflops that can be comfortable and useful, then leave them behind.
- **Belongings:** There is nowhere to leave a purse or bag. If it does not fit under a graduation gown, please leave it at home. Flat cross body bags and small fanny packs are great for graduation day. Weapons, helium balloons, and alcoholic beverages are not allowed per Memorial Coliseum regulations.
- **Concessions:** Eat before arriving at the Coliseum. Concessions will not be open. Bottled water will be available to students (but not guests).

STUDENT CHECK-IN/LINE-UP: At the check-in table, students will receive cards they need as they walk across the stage.

- **Media Release:** Each student will be asked to complete a Media Release form upon check-in.
- **Gray Card:** Please verify that your contact information listed is correct. Please update the card as needed. This card is for professional photographers and will be collected before crossing the stage.
- **White Card:** There will be one **white card** for each degree being earned. Names and honors will be announced for each individual graduate. Majors, minors and certificates are not announced during commencement.
 - **Honors:** The card will identify honors. The cumulative GPA designations for *Cum Laude*, *Magna Cum Laude*, and *Summa Cum Laude* are for undergraduates only. These are for cumulative GPAs of at least 3.5, 3.7, and 3.9, respectively.
 - **Pronunciation:** On the white cards, students may write a phonetic pronunciation of their name if it is difficult to say or often mispronounced.
 - **Career Information:** The back side of the card must be filled in for the career office.
 - There will be a table near check-in to complete these cards.
- **Undergraduate students:** Those with *Cum Laude*, *Magna Cum Laude*, and *Summa Cum Laude* designations will receive a gold honor cord upon check-in. This cord should be wrapped securely on the left arm (loop it

through itself). During the ceremony, when their name is read on stage, the cord will be draped around the student's neck by the dean.

- All other earned cords (from clubs, societies, minors, governance, etc.) should already be around the neck during line-up and the entire ceremony. Stoles are not permitted.
- **Graduate Students:** Please watch the following [video](#) to see how your master's hood should be worn. Fellow students and line-up staff can help before the ceremony begins to ensure hoods are correct. Doctoral students will be hooded on the stage. Master's students should be wearing hoods throughout the ceremony.
- **Tassels:** Should hang on the right side of the cap for undergraduate students. After all students have crossed the stage there will be a "Turning of the Tassel" event. Technically, graduate students have already had a turning of the tassel event previously when earning their undergraduate degree and therefore can begin commencement with their tassels already on the left and not participate in the Turning of the Tassel. Or they are welcome to join in the turning ceremony.
- **Line-up Area:** There will be a row of chairs for students circling the hallway surrounding the arena. Students are responsible for reviewing the easels placed throughout the hall that indicate where to sit to be in the proper order for the processional into the arena. These easels show degrees (and majors) for each cluster of seats as well as student names in line-up order. Students will need to review the information on the easels to determine their individual position in the line-up.
 - Not all students attend commencement, and some students attend commencement but will not be on the listing on the easel (if their degree audit was not approved by Mar. 31). There will be line-up assistants available to help place students.
- **The lined-up students will need to be in place by 1:55 p.m.** and should remain in order as they walk into the arena for the processional, which begins promptly at 2:00 p.m. For students with a gold honor cord wrapped around their left arm, please keep it secure. The cording is slippery against the gown and can slide off unnoticed. Graduation gowns must be zipped up fully for the processional, entire ceremony, and recessional.

THE CEREMONY: The commencement ceremony **begins at 2:00 p.m.** with the processional march through the entire length of the arena. Administration, trustees, and faculty lead the processional followed by students, with doctoral degree candidates processing first, then master's degree candidates, bachelor's degree candidates, and finally associate's degree candidates.

- **Students will be directed** into rows for seating upon processing into the arena. It might look like there will not be enough space, but there will be – the attendants are counting out 15 students for the 15 seats in the row, so please trust their direction.
- Everyone **remains standing** for the Invocation (prayer) and the National Anthem.
- Each student will have a **program on their seat**. It would be good to take the program home after the ceremony for family/guests who wish to have an extra copy. When guests arrive, they will receive one program per pair. Not every guest will receive an individual program.
- There will be some **speaking components** of the ceremony and then it will be time for degree conferral. Doctoral degree candidates will walk to and across the stage first, followed by master's, then bachelor's, and finally associate's degree candidates.
- Often the arena is still on ice for hockey season, so the walking surface may be a **false floor** of painted plywood over the ice. Feet may feel cold due to the ice, so closed-toed shoes may be more comfortable and shoes with socks even warmer.

An attendant will **release degree candidates row by row** to approach the stage. Additional attendants will show students the direction to proceed.

- As the degree conferral portion of the ceremony progresses, there will be students **walking in opposite directions** and crossing each other (because some are going up to the stage and some are returning from the stage).
- Also, the seat one returns to after walking across the stage **might not be their original seat**, so it is not wise to leave items behind. A small bag or fanny pack under the graduation gown will prevent phones, keys, etc. from being lost.

Students will have **two professional photographs** taken during commencement.

- The first professional photograph is taken upon **approaching the stage**. The photographer's assistant will take the gray card received during check-in and the photographer will snap each individual's photo against a backdrop. Friend shots and group shots are not permitted as this process needs to be rapid.
- The second photo will be taken on stage for each student while **shaking the President's hand**.
- Based on the email provided on the gray card, students will receive a message in a couple of weeks with a website link to **view and order photographs**.

CROSSING THE STAGE:

- If you have a blue card, give it to the reader before the white card.
- When students reach the top of the stage steps, they will **hand the white card to the Vice President of Academic Affairs**. This is how each name gets read as students cross the stage. Each student will walk across the stage only once. If multiple degrees are being earned, the student will cross the stage only once and present only one card.
- Next, **if there is a gold honor cord to award**, move forward a step or two and it will be taken from the student's left arm and draped around the student's neck by USF's Vice President for Healthcare Relations. At this point, the cord should no longer be securely tied to the arm but be draped loosely over the left arm so it can quickly and easily be grabbed and draped.
- The student will then proceed across the stage to the President. **Shake his hand, reach for the diploma cover being offered, turn slightly, smile for the second professional photograph, and then take the diploma cover and proceed the rest of the way across the stage**. The diploma cover will be empty. Diplomas will be ready for students several weeks after the end of the semester. If you graduated in December and have not received your diploma, please get in touch with the Registrar's office (registrar@sf.edu).
- Students need to **be careful descending the stage** steps to ensure the graduation gown does not catch on the railing. Also, please be cautious and use the handrail. Students will pause at the bottom of the steps to **receive a gift** from USF's Vice President for Catholic Culture and Student Life and then proceed back to the student seating following the instructions of the attendants (possibly crossing the line of students who have not yet been on stage).
- **Students cannot stop for photographs** after crossing the stage or descending the stairs because more graduates need to descend.
- Students are to **return to a seat** on the arena floor for the remainder of the ceremony.

Once degree conferrals are complete, it will be time for the **Turning of the Tassel** (undergraduate tassels will move from the right to the left). There will be some final words and a prayer, then the recessional. Students shall exit the arena through the recessional via the back end of the arena. Dignitaries from the stage will lead the recessional followed by Trustees, Sisters, faculty and finally the graduates. Graduates must remain in their seats until given the sign by attendants to join the recessional.

Find your friends and family to celebrate! **CONGRATULATIONS!**