Spring 2016 Commencement FAQ

This information only applies to commencement ceremonies being held in Ben Hill Griffin Stadium.

Why is it in the football stadium?

The O'Connell Center will be unavailable during spring commencement in preparation for extensive renovations that will begin soon. Due to the number of graduates and guests for spring commencement, it must be held in our largest available venue, Ben Hill Griffin Stadium.

What about inclement weather?

The ceremony will occur in sunshine and/or rain. If however the weather becomes severe, the ceremony may be postponed or cancelled (for health and safety issues only). Please check the local weather forecast before the ceremony so you can dress appropriately for the forecasted weather.

What do we do if the ceremony is postponed or cancelled?

An announcement will be made over the public address system if the ceremony is postponed or cancelled due to inclement weather (for health and/or safety issues only). Graduate candidates should return to the area below the south end zone where they lined up for the processional. Graduate candidates will remain in this area until notified that the ceremony will resume. Guests may choose to leave their seats or the stadium to seek shelter. If guests choose to leave the stadium, please use caution. Only prolong inclement weather will cause the ceremony to be cancelled. The cancelled ceremony will not be rescheduled. All commencement attendees should pay attention to any weather-related announcements and follow instructions given.

Are umbrellas allowed?

Umbrellas are not allowed. If there is a possibility of rain, we suggest bringing rain jackets or ponchos. Please check the local weather forecast before the ceremony so you can dress appropriately for the forecasted weather.

What about hot weather?

The ceremonies are scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. The temperature should decrease as the ceremonies progress. Direct sunlight and the desire for shade should not be a significant issue.

What about availability of water?

Concession stands will be open for the guests. Water, soft drinks and light snacks will be available for purchase. Bottled water will be provided to all graduate candidates on the field.

Will graduate candidates have access to restroom facilities?

Yes, restroom facilities will be available for graduate candidates before and during the ceremony. These are located near the line-up area.

Will tickets be required?

No, for ceremonies held in Ben Hill Griffin Stadium tickets will NOT be required, nor will there be any limit on the number of guests allowed per student. Seats will be on a first come, first served basis.
Where will the graduates be seated?
The students will be seated on the field facing the platform with their backs toward the south end zone. Students will possibly walk on both concrete and grass surfaces. Sensible shoes are recommended.

Where will guests sit?
All guests will be seated in the south end zone. There is no reserved seating, except for platform party guests.

What is the average ceremony time length?
2.5 to 3 hours

What gates will be open for guests to enter?
For the doctoral degree ceremony on Thursday, April 28, gates 15 and 18 will be open for guests. For the commencement ceremonies on Friday, Saturday and Sunday (April 29-May 1), guests may enter through gates 1, 15, 16 and 18.

Where should graduates gather before the ceremony?
Students should congregate below the south end zone in Ben Hill Griffin Stadium. This area is accessed via the set of stairs between gates 17 and 18. From the corner of Stadium Road and Gale Lemerand Drive (the Bull Gator Statue is at this intersection), travel east along the sidewalk on Stadium Road until you see a set of stairs on your left. If you reach Gate 17, you have gone too far.

Will there be a stage and, if so, where will it be located?
There will be a platform (stage) for platform party guests only. This will be located on the field between the 50-yard line and the south end zone. Students will also be seated on the field between the platform and the south end zone. The platform party will face the south end zone, and the students will face the platform.

Will students be walking across a stage?
Yes, as they are individually recognized. Students will possibly walk on both concrete and grass surfaces. Sensible shoes are recommended.

Will students and their names appear on a big screen?
Yes. Graduates’ names will appear on the big screen on the north end zone. This screen is large enough to be seen from the south end zone and will have a view of the student walking across the platform and each student’s name will be shown at the bottom of the screen. The screen on the south end zone will also be used.

Will the streaming feed of the ceremonies be available online?
Yes, the ceremonies will be live streamed and archived.

Will restrooms and food vendors be open?
Yes, there are plenty of restrooms, and concessions will be available for guests.

Where will those with handicap/mobility limitations be seated?
Handicap guests and those with mobility limitations should enter through Gate 18 and seek an usher’s attention for additional assistance and directions. Ushers will be wearing yellow tee shirts. There are approximately 90 wheelchair spaces in the south end zone, available on a first come, first-served basis. Due to limited space in this area, only one guest is allowed to sit with the disabled guest. Additionally, there are easy-access seats available for those with mobility limitations who are unable to maneuver the steps. Motorized scooters are allowed for guests with mobility limitations.
Where should guests with disabilities go when they arrive?
For handicap guests and those with limited mobility, we recommend you arrive early through Gate 18. Guests should seek the attention of an usher, wearing a yellow tee shirt, for additional assistance and directions upon arrival at gates 1, 15, 16 or 18.

Will there be a dropoff location and parking for those with disabilities?
There are handicap parking spaces in the O’Connell Center parking lot that will be available for commencement parking. These spaces are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Additionally, GatorLift will have a shuttle for guests with disabilities from the commuter lot located on South Gale Lemerand Drive to the stadium for all four ceremonies at the stadium. A drop-off location will be available at the Southeast corner of Gale Lemerand Drive and Stadium Road.

Where is the handicapped parking located?
There are 26 disabled-accessible parking spaces in the O’Connell Center parking lot, available on a first come, first-served basis. These spaces are designated with the official disable persons sign and reserved for persons with appropriate parking decal or permit. Additional handicap parking is available in the commuter lot on South Gale Lemerand Drive.

Is there a shuttle available for persons with disabilities?
Yes, Gator Lift will be providing free shuttle service to Ben Hill Griffin Stadium. Gator Lift vehicles can accommodate ten passengers and up to two wheelchairs and are equipped with lifts for easy access. All drivers are trained to provide boarding assistance. Passengers with disabilities receive priority seating. Temporarily disabled individuals also may ride Gator Lift. All other guests are requested to ride the school buses providing shuttle service to/from Ben Hill Griffin Stadium.

Will flowers be available for purchase outside the stadium?
Yes, flowers will be available for purchase.

Will the O’Connell Center construction affect available parking?
The majority of the parking in the O’Connell Center lot will still be available for commencement guests. Three shuttle buses will also be available for guests parking in the commuter lot on South Gale Lemerand Drive. These buses will run continuously before and after the ceremonies.

Will the Champions Club or Touchdown Terrace be open?
No. Only the south end zone of the stadium will be open and available to the public. No other areas of the stadium will be open to commencement guests.

Where do I pick up my regalia?
Regalia will be available for pick up beginning April 19 in the UF Bookstore located in the Reitz Union.

Where do I return my regalia?
Only doctoral degree graduates are required to return their regalia. Doctoral degree graduates (Ph.D., Au.D., D.P.M, D.P.T., Ed.D) can return regalia after the ceremony to the Gator Sports Shop in the south end zone or to the UF Bookstore, beginning May 1 and no later than the deadline. Failure to return the regalia by the deadline results in a late fee of $5 per day, with a $25 maximum late fee. Professional school graduates (DMD, DVM, JD, LLM, MD) should return regalia to the designated location specified by your college.

Questions? Please email us at uf-commencement@ufl.edu

Congratulations Gator!