



Dear Graduate,

Thank you for your interest in delivering the student address at our upcoming 2021 Virtual Stateside Spring Commencement. Competition will be keen for this honor, and if selected, you are sure to remember this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

I'd like to outline some important points about this role and explain the selection process.

Overview

Stateside doctoral, master's, bachelor's, and associate degree recipients and candidates will be recognized during UMGC's 2021 Virtual Stateside Spring Commencement, which premieres on May 15, 2021.

Role of the Student Speaker in the Ceremony

The student speaker will be featured during the short live program that airs on May 15 starting at noon eastern time. (The speech will be available for on-demand viewing immediately following the live program.)

Speech Guidance

An effective, memorable student commencement address is relevant—and brief. If selected, your speech will need to be delivered in about five minutes. We will work with you to revise your speech to around 600–750 words.

Good speeches have a strong theme and tell a compelling story. There should be something that your fellow graduates, their guests, faculty, and alumni can relate to. Your speech should share meaningful lessons learned during your academic journey with UMGC and inspire your audience to pursue lifelong learning.

Commencement speeches at UMGC typically have four parts:

1. Greetings to the university president and other speakers, faculty, and audience, including heartfelt acknowledgement of family and friends who are watching
2. The speaker's UMGC story and reflection on how it relates to the academic community and our world at large

3. Encouragement to peers, family, and friends to recognize the value of education and the lessons the speaker has learned along the way (e.g., explaining that together, we can change the world for good)
4. Closing call to action that urges your listeners to move forward

With your speech, you should seek to inspire, motivate, and encourage everyone watching; make your message inclusive and relevant. Ideally, you want to show how your unique UMGC experience translates into something positive, exciting, and uplifting—all while remembering to thank the faculty, family, and friends whose support made it all possible. You should reflect on the mission of UMGC and encourage everyone present to pursue lifelong learning.

Make your speech memorable by including specific examples that support and illustrate the broader themes you are expressing. These examples are usually drawn from personal experience and should be described in succinct detail. For example, one recent student speaker encouraged her audience to turn failures into successes and to persevere at all costs. She illustrated her theme by revealing that she had completed her degree despite having suffered a traumatic brain injury. Her story was poignant and powerful.

Who Can Apply

To compete for this honor, you must be eligible for spring commencement (i.e., you must be a winter 2021 graduate or candidate for spring 2021 graduation).

You must also meet the following criteria:

- Have a minimum cumulative GPA (as of February 15) of 3.0 for undergraduates and 3.5 for graduate students
- Be in good disciplinary standing (no record of academic integrity or code of conduct violations)
- Not have any overdue balances (if on payment plan, must be current)

You must be available to audition by phone or online one day during the period of March 24 through April 2 (excluding weekends).

If selected, you must

- Work with UMGC's speech coach to refine and revise your speech.
- Work with our video team to record your speech at home or another suitable remote location.

You must be willing to partner with our video and technical support staff to record your speech with suitable video and audio quality. We may offer to provide equipment to facilitate this, but federal, state, and local health guidelines will be followed at all times. We do not anticipate asking anyone to come to our studio or any UMGC location.

How to Request an Audition

1. Write a statement of interest in 250 words or less. Tell us why your UMGC journey is compelling and how it is representative of your peers. Include the theme(s) of your proposed commencement address and any public speaking experience you have.
2. Draft a proposed speech that is
 - a. Provided in Microsoft Word or Google Document format
 - b. 750 words or less
 - c. Double-spaced
 - d. Numbered on each page (but without any identifying information on the document itself)
 - e. Saved as a file named in this way: LastnameFirstnameSpring2021
3. Record a good-quality YouTube video of yourself delivering the speech. (Set your video's privacy settings to "unlisted" so that only people with the link can view it.)
4. Then [fill out the online student speaker application and attach your materials](#).
5. Submit your application **no later than 11:59 p.m. eastern time on Monday, March 22, 2021**.

We will contact the selected finalists for auditions from March 24 through April 2. Anyone not selected for an audition will be notified by email by April 30.

Finalists who audition but are not selected will be invited to record short video vignettes that will be featured as part of the on-demand portion of virtual commencement.

If you have any questions about the process, please contact my office at commencement@umgc.edu. Congratulations on your academic achievements, and I wish you the best as you compete for this high honor.

Sincerely,



Harold Blackmon Jr.
Director
Commencement Services