



Dear Graduate,

Thank you for your interest in delivering the student address at our upcoming winter 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

Master's, bachelor's, and associate degree recipients will participate in two ceremonies (9:15 a.m. and 3:45 p.m.) on Saturday, December 18, 2021, at the Xfinity Center on the campus of University of Maryland, College Park. Eligible graduates may request an audition; one student speaker will be chosen for each ceremony.

Role in the Ceremony

The student speaker marches in with the university president and other members of the official platform party and is seated on the stage wearing academic regalia. The student speaker's guests will be given reserved seating along with the other guests of the platform party.

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.

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 illustrated her theme of perseverance 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 winter commencement (i.e., you must be a summer 2021 graduate or candidate for fall 2021 graduation).

You must also meet the following criteria:

- Have a minimum cumulative GPA (as of October 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 meeting one day during the period of December 1 through 9 (excluding weekends).

If selected, you must

- Work with UMGC's speech coach to refine and revise your speech.
- Be available for in-person rehearsal at the Xfinity Center on Friday, December 17.
- March in regalia with the platform party and be seated on stage during the ceremony.

Selected speakers will normally deliver the address at the ceremony they are registered for; however, if there is a time conflict (e.g., two selectees registered for the same ceremony), we may make your selection contingent on agreeing to switch ceremonies.

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 Doc 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: LastnameFirstnameWinter2021
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.)

Then [fill out the online student speaker application](#). The application will collect the necessary information from you, including a link to your YouTube video.

Submit your application **no later than 11:59 p.m. eastern time on Monday, November 29, 2021.**

We will contact the selected finalists starting December 1 to schedule auditions. Anyone not selected for an audition will be notified by email by December 13.

If you have any questions about the process, please feel welcome to 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Blackmon Jr.', with a stylized, cursive script.

Harold Blackmon Jr.
Director
Commencement Services