



OPSU COMMENCEMENT: GUIDELINES, PROTOCOL, AND PROCEDURES

(June 2005; Revised August 2007 and September 2008 and August 2009)

To assist with the planning and implementation of the annual commencement ceremony at Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU), the following guidelines have been established.

Commencement is a comprehensive university activity and requires that graduates, faculty members, and university administrators attend. To be excused from attending commencement, graduates must request permission in writing of the Vice President of Academic Affairs no later than May 1.

The duties and responsibilities of the various individuals and groups involved in commencement include, but are not limited to, those mentioned below. Deadlines must be met.

I. Senior Class

The senior class will hold at least four meetings during the academic year—September, October, November, and February—to discuss and solidify its commencement ceremony. The commencement coordinator(s) (CC), appointed by the university president, shall call all meetings. All activities in these senior class meetings will be reported via meeting minutes by the senior class secretary/reporter to the OPSU Collegian for publication no later than two weeks after the meeting. In addition, minutes will be posted on the Commencement webpage of the OPSU website: www.opsu.edu. Together, the senior class officers and the CC shall review all notes prior to sending the report to the Collegian.

Dates for these senior class meetings are suggested here.

A. First Meeting

1. This meeting should occur during the first week of September. This meeting will be publicized by the CC in the Collegian and by postings on campus and by OPSU student email.
2. During this meeting, the agendas stipulated below of the other senior class meetings will be presented. Agendas will be either published in the Collegian and/or posted on campus.
3. Senior class officers (president, vice-president, and secretary/reporter) will be nominated and elected by simple majority vote by the seniors in attendance at this meeting. These senior class officers' names shall be listed in the commencement program. The secretary/reporter will record the minutes of this meeting, and with the approval of the class officers and the CC, those minutes will be published in the Collegian within two weeks. In addition, the minutes will be posted on the webpage referenced above.
4. During this meeting, the seniors in attendance **may** select a committee of no more than three to establish decorum /behavior recommendations for the commencement ceremony. (See B.4.f.).

This committee, the senior class officers, maintenance director, and CC will establish meetings prior to the third senior class meeting to create its recommendations. These recommendations will be completed no later than the third senior class meeting when said recommendations shall be discussed and voted on by the attending seniors. Those recommendations will then be presented in writing by the senior class president and the CC to the OPSU president for approval no later than November 30.

5. During this meeting, the seniors in attendance **may** select a committee of no more than three seniors to examine the possibility of planning for and decorating the gymnasium for commencement. (See B.4.f.). This committee, the senior class officers, the vice president of academic affairs, and the CC shall establish meetings prior to the third senior class meeting to create recommendations. The decoration recommendations shall be presented to the senior class at the third senior class meeting when said proposal will be discussed and voted on by the attending seniors. The recommendation will be presented by the senior class president and the CC to the OPSU president for approval no later than November 30. Note: There is and will be no budget to support the actions/decisions of this committee.

B. Second Meeting

1. This meeting should occur during the first week of October. This meeting will be publicized by the senior class vice president in the Collegian, by postings on campus, and on the website referenced above.
2. Prior to the meeting, the senior class officers shall meet with the CC to prepare for the meeting.
3. The senior class secretary/reporter shall record the minutes of this meeting, and with the approval of the senior class officers and the CC, those minutes shall be published in the Collegian within two weeks. In addition, minutes will be posted on the webpage referenced above.
4. During this meeting, seniors in attendance will discuss the following items:
 - a. Invited Dignitaries.** The senior class may recommend dignitaries to be invited to its commencement ceremony to sit with the “platform party.” Along with the CC, the senior class president will present this list of recommendations in writing to the OPSU president.
 - b. Ministers.** Traditionally, two local pastors are invited to offer an invocation and a benediction at commencement. However, if a graduating senior is an ordained minister of a recognized religion or if a graduating senior’s parent is an ordained minister of a recognized religion, that minister may be invited by the senior class to offer the invocation or the benediction. Ministers selected by the class at this meeting will be officially invited to participate in commencement by the CC not later than October 31.
 - c. Music.** Traditionally, the OPSU concert band and chamber singers perform at commencement. The senior class may recommend a special vocal song to be sung by the OPSU Chamber Singers. If the class wishes for this group to sing a particular song, the class will purchase the music for the singers. The CC will invite the musicians to participate in commencement.
 - d. Flowers.** Traditionally, red, white, and blue corsages/boutennaires are purchased for commencement ushers and marshals and select dignitaries. In addition, at least two bouquets are ordered to be displayed near the lecterns. Seniors may decide on additional corsages/boutennaires for recommended dignitaries. (See “Invited Dignitaries” above.) The cost of the flowers comes from the senior class account. (The senior class account provides funds for flowers, postage, printing, diplomas, and diploma covers only.) The CC during the spring semester shall contact juniors to secure marshals and ushers for commencement. The CC will then order the flowers as needed.
 - e. Reception.** The President’s Office sponsors a post-commencement barbeque on the university clock tower plaza. The senior class president shall inform the president in writing no later than October 31 of the class’ intention to support and enjoy the barbeque held in its honor.

f. Decorum. The OPSU commencement is a ceremony that should be conducted with gravity and dignity. Seniors must realize that this ceremony—their graduation true—is observed, evaluated, and criticized by others: community, family, campus, friends, Oklahoma State Board of Regents' members, and elected state officials. Therefore, spontaneous and planned celebratory actions should not occur. Inflating or exhibiting beach balls during the ceremony is prohibited as their presence detracts from the dignity of the service. In addition, the use of silly string is prohibited as its chemical properties damage furniture and flooring. In addition, air horns are discouraged as their sounds discomfort guests. If the senior class wishes, paper confetti or crepe paper streamers may be purchased by the class and distributed to seniors to be used immediately after commencement. The senior class shall establish a committee of no more than three students to work with the CC and the vice president of academic affairs to monitor commencement behavior and decorum. This committee will create a document that stipulates commencement behavior and the penalties for inappropriate behavior. This document and its recommendations will be completed no later than November 30, approved by the OPSU president, and be distributed to all seniors during the spring semester. (See I.A.4). The senior class may create a committee of no more than three senior students to work with the CC, the university president, and the director of maintenance to decorate the gymnasium in an appropriate fashion to help promote a festive, yet dignified and collegiate atmosphere for the commencement ceremony itself. Such recommendations will be presented to the OPSU president for approval or disapproval no later than November 30. (See I.A.5).

g. Commencement Location: Oscar Williams Field House.

h. Special Recognition. If the senior class wishes, it may select one special honoree and recommend that he/she be recognized during commencement and/or be seated as a member of the "platform party." Graduating seniors may select an alumnus, a graduating senior, a faculty member, an administrator, or a mentor who has influenced and/or helped and/or supported the class as a whole. The honoree's name and the rationale for his/her selection shall be presented in writing and in person as a recommendation to the university president by the senior class president and the CC. The meetings for this committee shall be discussed and established after discussion among the committee members, the senior class president, the university president, and the CC. An engraved plaque or framed certificate will be presented to the honoree during commencement.

i. Other. If the senior class wishes to establish a class motto, colors, or song, it may discuss and make such recommendations at this meeting. These recommendations will be brought to the university president in writing and in person by the senior class president and the CC. Such will be printed in the commencement program.

C. Third Meeting

1. This meeting should occur during the first week of November. The senior class vice president shall ensure that news of this meeting be published in the Collegian at least two weeks in advance, be posted on campus, and appear on the webpage referenced above.
2. Prior to this meeting, the senior class officers and the CC shall meet to prepare for the meeting
3. The minutes of this meeting will be taken by the senior class secretary/reporter and submitted, with the permission of the senior class officers

and the CC, to the Collegian for publication within two weeks. In addition, the minutes will be posted on the webpage referenced above.

4. At this meeting, seniors in attendance shall discuss the following items:
 - a. Academic Regalia.** The bookstore manager shall attend this meeting to offer options, pricing, and ordering deadlines on seniors' academic regalia. Caps and gowns shall be black so as not to intimate discrimination based on gender. Tassels' colors reflect graduates' majors. All graduates wear the same academic regalia at commencement.
 - b. Class Ring.** The bookstore manager shall offer information concerning vendors of class rings if seniors wish to purchase them.
 - c. Commencement Announcements.** The bookstore manager shall offer information concerning vendors of announcements if seniors wish to purchase them.
 - d. Photographer.** Seniors shall decide if they want a professional photographer in attendance at commencement. Individually, students will purchase photograph packages from the selected photographer who will snap the graduate the moment that he/she receives his diploma cover during commencement. The CC will secure the commencement photographer and invite him/her to this meeting where he/she can explain the process by which the seniors' graduation will be photographed. The photographer shall attend commencement rehearsal.
 - e. Commencement Rehearsal.** Rehearsal for commencement will occur at 5:00 p.m. the evening before commencement. Rehearsal will occur in the gymnasium. Commencement rehearsal shall be conducted by the university administration and the CC. During rehearsal, graduates will be asked to complete and submit graduate surveys for the OPSU Office of Institutional Research. Graduating seniors, university administrators, and the CC shall attend rehearsal.
 - f. Commencement.** The location, date, and time for commencement will have been announced officially. Graduates should arrive no later than 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the commencement ceremony. The senior class president or the CC or the OPSU Office of Public Information will write a press release about commencement for publication and general dissemination.
 - g. Commencement Communication Packet.** At this meeting, information and material shall be gathered so that it may be printed and mailed to all seniors, whether they have attended a senior class meeting or not. In addition, this information will be given to the Collegian for publication. This packet shall originate in the office(s) of the CC and include information about photographer, academic regalia, commencement protocol, commencement decorum, rehearsal, commencement location/date/time, etc. In addition, these forms/information will be posted on the webpage referenced above. It is imperative that seniors submit these documents in a timely fashion.

4. Fourth Meeting

1. This meeting should take place during the first week of February. The senior class vice president will ensure that news of this meeting is published in the Collegian, posted on the webpage referenced above, and posted on campus at least two weeks prior.
2. Prior to this meeting, the senior class officers and the CC shall meet to prepare for this meeting.
3. At this meeting, the senior class secretary/reporter will take minutes and, with the approval of the senior class officers and the CC, shall submit those minutes

to the Collegian for publication within two weeks. In addition, the minutes will be posted on the webpage referenced above.

4. At this meeting, the senior class president and the CC shall review all commencement decisions with the attending seniors. Seniors should use this meeting to ask pertinent questions about timelines, commencement, regalia, and responsibilities regarding commencement.

5. By this meeting—the first week of February—all graduates must have completed the paperwork and paid all fees required of them in the Office of the Registrar so that they may graduate and receive their diplomas upon the completion of their academic requirements. If seniors have not completed this step in their graduation process, there is no guarantee that their names will appear in the commencement program.

6. By the beginning of March, all graduates should have completed their bookstore orders for their academic regalia. In addition, graduates should have purchased their commencement announcements and class rings if they desire such.

7. The vice president of academic affairs, the registrar, and bookstore manager will attend this meeting to answer any questions pertaining to their roles in and support of commencement.

II. Commencement Coordinator(s)

In addition to the duties outlined above, the CC shall also

- A. Help in the creation of and proofreading of the commencement program
- B. Design, set-up, and oversee gymnasium on day of rehearsal and commencement
- C. Arrange for the installation of microphones/sound at commencement
- D. Coordinate with the president's office, the vice president of academic affairs' office, registrar, physical plant, and the bookstore about the details and procedures of commencement and rehearsal
- E. Carry out other responsibilities asked of him/her/them
- F. Secure commencement photographer
- G. Secure ministers for invocation and benediction
- H. Secure flowers for commencement
- I. Secure marshals and ushers
- J. Assemble "senior packets" for mailing in February
- K. Secure music for commencement

III. President's Office

In addition to any duty outlined above, the Office of the OPSU President shall

- A. Issue formal invitations to dignitaries to attend commencement
- B. Select a commencement speaker and publicize that selection with the help of the Office of Campus Communications
- C. Arrange and host the post-commencement reception
- D. Review/modify/accept/reject senior class proposals dealing with commencement decorum and decor

IV. Vice President of Academic Affairs

In addition to any duty outlined above, the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs shall oversee and coordinate

- A. Faculty line-up
- B. Graduating seniors' line-up
- C. Date/time of commencement
- D. Development and proofreading of program
- E. Honor cords
- F. Academic regalia for dignitaries
- G. Work with the senior class committee on commencement decoration plans, if the class opts to establish this committee

H. Attend final senior class meeting

V. Registrar

In addition to any duty outlined above, the Office of the Registrar shall

- A. Identify graduating seniors by February in time for the senior packet mailing
- B. Compile GPA's, addresses, and names of all juniors for the CC by no later than January 31
- C. Develop and proofread commencement program
- D. Order diplomas and diploma covers
- E. Ensure diploma covers' arrival at the commencement location the morning of commencement
- F. Review content of CC's packet to be mailed to all seniors in the spring semester
- G. Establish and maintain senior class account
- H. Attend last senior class meeting

VI. Office of Campus Communications

In addition to any duty outlined above, the Office of Campus Communications shall

- A. Publish dates of all senior class meetings
- B. Publish results of all senior class meetings
- C. Publish commencement date/time/location/speaker
- D. Help develop and proofread the commencement program
- E. Print commencement program
- F. Ensure that commencement programs are delivered to the commencement location the morning of commencement
- G. Set up microphones/speakers for the "platform party" prior to commencement rehearsal

VII. Bookstore Manager

In addition to any duty outlined above, the manager of the university bookstore shall

- A. Provide information on academic regalia, class rings, and announcements at a senior class meeting
- B. Establish and publish deadlines for ordering and receiving academic regalia
- C. Review and contribute to the seniors' commencement communication packet generated by the CC
- D. Attend final senior class meeting

VIII. Faculty Senate President

The faculty senate president shall

- A. Lead commencement processional
- B. Carry university mace
- C. Place mace in its stand
- D. Sit with platform party
- E. Lead faculty from commencement

IX. Faculty Members

- A. Faculty members shall attend commencement unless excused by the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Permission must be asked in writing.
- B. Faculty members, wearing academic regalia, should arrive at the commencement location no later than 20 minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony to take their place in the processional line-up.
- C. Faculty members are strongly encouraged to attend the post-commencement reception to honor the graduates.

X. Director of Physical Plant

In addition to any duty outlined above, the director of the physical plant shall provide physical set-up/tear-down/equipment for commencement which includes, but is not limited to the following items:

- A. Cover gymnasium floor
- B. Set up elevated platform for administrators and dignitaries.
- C. Set up chairs for graduates, faculty, platform party, and handicapped guests
- D. Open doors and windows for rehearsal and commencement
- E. Close/lock doors and windows after rehearsal and commencement
- F. Move mace and stand from president's office to gymnasium on day of commencement
- G. Deliver diploma covers and programs to gymnasium on the morning of commencement
- H. Place US and Oklahoma flags in the gymnasium
- I. Ensure a clean and safe commencement location
- J. Set up lecterns and tables and secure table coverings
- K. Seal off parking lot on the northeast side of gymnasium
- L. Work with senior class committee on commencement decoration recommendations

XI. Marshals

- A. Four marshals are selected by the CC from the junior class.
- B. Lead graduates into and out of the commencement ceremony.
- C. Designate by row when graduates should stand and proceed to the front to receive their diploma covers and then when graduates should be seated upon returning to their chairs
- D. Attend rehearsal
- E. Arrive at commencement at least 30 minutes before commencement
- F. These students' names will be listed in the commencement program.

XII. Ushers

- A. Four ushers are selected by the CC from the junior class after the marshals have been secured
- B. Arrive at commencement at least 60 minutes before commencement
- C. Stand at door(s) of commencement location to
 1. hand out programs
 2. answer guests' questions
- D. These students' names will be listed in the commencement program.

XIII. Rehearsal

At the commencement location, graduates will

- A. Find name cards taped to their chairs and be seated
- B. Learn about the protocol of commencement
- C. With the marshals, practice the recessional and the processional for the ceremony
- D. Make final arrangements with the photographer
- E. Complete graduate surveys administered by the Office of Institutional Research
- F. Leave name card on their chairs or taped to their chairs

XIV. Commencement

Graduating seniors will

- A. Arrive no later than 30 minutes prior to commencement
- B. Find commencement programs on their chairs
- C. Wear appropriate clothing under their academic regalia
- D. Line-up according to seating arrangements as marshals instruct
- E. Follow marshals into commencement and during commencement
- F. Refrain from obtrusive, boisterous, and noisy celebratory measures during the commencement ceremony itself. (See B.4.f.)

- G. Comport themselves with dignity befitting the event
- H. May celebrate by throwing paper confetti, crepe paper streamers, or their mortarboards into the air after the platform party and the faculty members have left the commencement location. (See B.4.f.)

XV. Platform Party

- A. Sits facing the graduates
- B. Includes
 1. Invited dignitaries and ministers
 2. University administrators
 3. Commencement speaker
 4. University deans
 5. Faculty Senate president