Academic College Roles at Commencement Ceremonies

There are several roles members of the faculty and staff of academic colleges fulfill during the university’s commencement ceremonies each winter and spring. This resource, presented in alphabetical order, provides an overview of these roles as well as a brief description of role responsibilities and functions when applicable. Information about regalia and frequently asked questions about where to park and when to arrive is located on the Commencement Information for Faculty page.

Associate Deans

Associate deans are members of the stage party and primarily coordinate student speaker and banner carrier selection for their respective college. During the ceremony, the associate deans shake degree candidates’ hands as they cross the stage. Additional aspects of the associate deans’ role include:

- Attending Academic Subcommittee meetings with the Office of the Provost team
- Review of college information in the ceremony program draft
- Review of college and program information in the ceremony script

Deans

Academic college deans are members of the stage party and play an important role by briefly addressing graduates prior to degree conferral, participating in doctoral degree conferral (if applicable), and shaking degree candidates hands as they cross the stage. Additional aspects of the deans’ role include:

- Consulting with Assistant Provost of Communication & Engagement regarding format, and components such as alumni involvement
- Review of college information in the ceremony program draft
- Review of college and name information in the ceremony script
- Preparing a one to two sentence congratulatory statement to give prior to introducing the college’s student speaker(s).

The dean of Graduate Studies plays an important role in coordinating and training the doctoral advisors and doctoral degree candidates.
**Department Chairpersons**

Departmental chairpersons and program directors are members of the stage party. They represent academic leadership as well as the academic “home” of degree candidates. Chairpersons may also serve as readers, name card presenters, VIP marshals, and grand marshals. On ceremony day, members of the stage party report to the SECU Arena Multipurpose Room (located on third floor).

**Degree Candidate Marshals**

Degree candidate marshals lead the undergraduate and graduate students into the ceremony, direct them on and off the stage to receive their scrolls, and lead them out during the recessional. They are part of the faculty processional and work closely work closely with the ceremony floor coordinators during the conferral of degrees.

**Faculty Processional**

Faculty marshals, student marshals and faculty members who march and sit on the arena floor (in front of or next to degree candidates) during the ceremony are members of the faculty processional. On ceremony day, members of the faculty processional report to Towson Center, Room 117.

- Due to space limitations resulting from the increasing number of degree candidates, the maximum number of processing faculty participants per college is 54 in the spring. The maximum number of processing faculty participants per college is 27 in the winter. Note: The total number of processing faculty does not include faculty or degree candidate marshals.

**Faculty Marshals**

Faculty marshals will lead the faculty in and out of the ceremony and are members of the faculty processional. Typically, the Lead Marshal serves as one of the Faculty Marshals.
Grand Marshal

The grand marshal is a faculty member who is nominated by the Dean and then must be approved by the Provost for this role. This is typically a senior and well-respected faculty member within the college. This person carries the mace and concludes the ceremony, being the first one to process in and out. A mandatory rehearsal for grand marshals takes place the Tuesday prior to the ceremonies.

Lead Marshal

Each academic college designates a lead marshal who typically serves for three to five years in this role. Lead marshals work collaboratively with the dean, associate dean, chairs, Commencement Committee, and Office of the Provost to coordinate and share information about faculty participation in Commencement. The lead marshal usually serves as a faculty marshal, but deans have previously selected lead marshals to serve as a VIP marshal. Additional aspects of the lead marshal position include:

- Attending Academic Subcommittee meetings with the Office of the Provost team
- Distributing parking passes to members of the faculty processional
- Troubleshooting unforeseen issues on ceremony day and serving as a point of contact with Office of the Provost representatives.

Name Card Presenters

Name card presenters are members of the stage party who take name cards from the degree candidates to give to readers as the students step onto the stage to get their scrolls. A mandatory rehearsal for name card presenters takes place the Tuesday prior to the ceremonies.

Name Card Readers

Readers are members of the stage party and are responsible for reading the names of degree candidates from their respective college. A mandatory rehearsal for name card readers takes place the Tuesday prior to the ceremonies.

- The Office of the Provost provides readers with online access to degree candidate names and recordings three to four weeks prior to the ceremony.
**Stage Party**

Members of the stage party include department chairpersons, program directors, Grand Marshals, VIP marshals, Name Readers, Name Card Presenters and faculty members representing Senate, AAUP or another university entity sit on stage during the ceremony with the President, Provost, Vice-Provost, Vice-Presidents, Deans, Associate Deans, Board of Regent representative, Board of Visitor representatives, Alumni Association representative, and GSA and SGA representatives. On ceremony day, members of the stage party enter SECU Arena through the Lot 20 (Gate 3 door) and report to the Multipurpose Room on third floor.

**VIP Marshals**

VIP marshals lead the stage party on and off the stage during the ceremonies. Frequently, deans select retiring or long-serving faculty for this role. A mandatory rehearsal for VIP marshals takes place the Tuesday prior to the ceremonies.

**Roles by the Number**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Total for Spring</th>
<th>Total for Winter</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree Candidate Marshals</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Marshals</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Marshal</td>
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<td>Rotating schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name Card Presenters</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name Card Readers</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processing Faculty</td>
<td>54 (maximum)</td>
<td>27 (maximum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIP Marshals</td>
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