



D.C. AREA COMMENCEMENT

SPRING 2026 | MAY 17 | 1:00 P.M.

Center for the Arts
George Mason University
4373 Mason Pond Dr, Fairfax, VA 22030

PRELUDE

Quintessential Brass Repertoire

ACADEMIC PROCESSIONAL

POSTING OF COLORS

Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets

NATIONAL ANTHEM

DC Washington

WELCOME

Barbara Hoopes
Graduate School Associate Dean

REMARKS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Timothy D. Sands
University President

REMARKS FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Lance Collins
Vice President for the Greater Washington, D.C., Area

REMARKS FROM THE GRADUATE SCHOOL DEAN

Aimée Surprenant
Graduate School Dean

GRADUATE STUDENT SPEAKERS

Reeba Khan
Master's Degree Candidate in Information Technology

Pranay Dhalwani
Master's Degree Candidate in Engineering, Computer Science and Applications

INTRODUCTION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Timothy D. Sands

GRADUATION ADDRESS

Joyce A. Barr
Professor of Practice in the School of Public and International Affairs and former U.S. Ambassador

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES AND CONFERRAL OF DEGREES

Aimée Surprenant and Timothy D. Sands

Reading of names: Alexis Snyder

ALUMNI REMARKS

Stephanie Alexander BS '98, MBA '12

CLOSING REMARKS

Aimée Surprenant

RECESSIONAL

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

The Honorable Joyce A. Barr has been a Professor of Practice with the School of Public and International Affairs since 2018. A retired career Foreign Service Officer, her last appointment was as Assistant Secretary for Administration at the U.S. Department of State. Earlier, she served as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Namibia.



She was inducted into the National Defense University Hall of Fame and is a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration. She serves on the boards of the American Academy of Diplomacy, the American Foreign Service Protective Association, the Masy Group, and Pacific Lutheran University. Prior to her Namibian assignment, Ambassador Barr was posted to U.S. embassies in Sweden, Hungary, Kenya, Sudan, Turkmenistan, and Malaysia. She had senior leadership positions at National Defense University and became the first Interim Chancellor of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (now Eisenhower School).

She holds a bachelor's degree from Pacific Lutheran University, a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University, and a Master of Science in national resource strategy from National Defense University. She was awarded an honorary doctorate from Pacific Lutheran University. Her awards and honors include the Joint Distinguished Civilian Service Award from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

THE ACADEMIC PROCESSION

The following information, digested from “An Academic Costume Code and Ceremony Guide” prepared by the American Council on Education, may prove helpful in identifying the costumes you will see in the Commencement Procession.

When American colleges and universities desired to adopt some suitable system of academic apparel many years ago, a conference held at Columbia University in 1895 made up of representatives from various institutions drew up a “By-Law Regulation, or Statute” for the establishment of a suitable code of academic dress for colleges and universities in the United States. This code, with modifications made in 1959, is still in force; the costumes and colors, trimmings, and patterns you will see are all traditional and interpret both degree and the field of learning. The bachelor’s gown, designed to be worn closed, has pointed sleeves; the master’s gown, which may be worn open or closed, has an oblong sleeve open at the wrist which hangs down in traditional manner. The rear part of its oblong shape is square cut and the front part has the arc cut away. The doctor’s gown has bell-shaped sleeves. It may be worn open or closed. Bachelor’s and master’s gowns are untrimmed. Doctor’s gowns are faced with black velvet with three bars across the sleeves; or the color of velvet may be that which is distinctive of the degree, agreeing with that of the edging of the hood. The colors you will see in the hoods and gowns of our faculty represent the various fields in which the degrees were taken.

A few are:

ACCOUNTANCY, COMMERCE,

BUSINESS: Drab (Yellow-Brown)

AGRICULTURE: Maize (Pale Yellow)

ARCHITECTURE: Blue-Violet (Purple)

ARTS, LETTERS, HUMANITIES: White

ECONOMICS: Copper

EDUCATION: Light Blue

ENGINEERING: Orange Natural

RESOURCES: Russet (Rust)

PHILOSOPHY: Dark Blue

VETERINARY MEDICINE: Gray

SCIENCE: Bright Gold (Golden Yellow)

The hoods, differing in length for the three degrees (bachelor’s, master’s, and doctor’s), are lined with the official colors of the university or college conferring the degree, usually with one color forming a chevron pattern over the other (for example, orange and maroon for Virginia Tech). Hoods are edged and bound with velvet of the color appropriate for the degree. You will see in our procession many edged with dark blue for doctor of philosophy. Mortarboards are the approved headgear. Tassels are worn on the right side prior to receiving a degree and on the left side after the degree has been conferred. The tassel may be of gold if the holder has a doctor’s degree.

