THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GRADUATION AND COMMENCEMENT

Graduation is achieved at the end of your academic career after the completion of all certificate or degree requirements for a specific program of study. Commencement is the ceremony in which you celebrate your academic accomplishments with family, friends, and SMC faculty and staff. Not all students who graduate choose to participate in the ceremony, but all students who participate in Commencement must have met graduation requirements or be eligible for graduation by the end of the term. In some instances, students missing one or two courses (up to 8 units) that will be taken in the Summer following the Commencement ceremony may be allowed to participate, provided they enroll in those courses.

OUR COMMENCEMENT TRADITION

Commencement is one of the most celebrated and important events hosted by Santa Monica College every year. It is both a formal and traditional academic ceremony where degrees are conferred and students are recognized for their scholarly accomplishments. The Commencement ceremony is held in June, on the last day of the Spring semester. The ceremony takes place at Corsair Field. The ceremony is hosted by the Enrollment Services Office and lasts approximately 2 hours. Students are joined by their families and friends, and by SMC faculty, staff, and administrators, and the Board of Trustees. Several speakers will participate in the ceremony, including the College's Superintendent/President, the Board of Trustees Chair, a graduating student speaker, the Academic Senate President, and a Commencement Speaker.

DIPLOMAS

Diplomas are not distributed at the Commencement ceremony. Your diploma will be mailed to your permanent home address after the final evaluation of your record takes place. Diplomas are mailed approximately 12-16 weeks after the Ceremony to students who confirm their address. Only students attending the Commencement Ceremony will receive a free SMC diploma case. Diploma cases are not available for purchase.

HONORS

Graduation Honors are awarded to students who complete an Associate degree or a Bachelor's degree with a degree-applicable cumulative GPA of 3.0 – 3.69; High Honors are awarded to those with a degree-applicable cumulative GPA of 3.70 – 3.99; and Highest Honors to those with a degree-applicable cumulative GPA of 4.0. Coursework from other institutions is used in GPA calculation.
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Admissions & Records | www.smc.edu/graduation

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THE BASICS

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GRADUATING STUDENT SPEAKER
Graduating students who possess a minimum degree-applicable cumulative GPA of 3.0 (including external coursework) will be sent an invitation to apply for Student Speaker. A draft of their proposed speech on a topic of the College’s choosing must be submitted for initial consideration. Approximately, 5-6 students will be selected for audition before a panel, and the Student Speaker will be selected. The selected student will then work with a faculty member to refine their speech over the course of a few weeks.
CHECKLIST FOR GRADUATING STUDENTS: PRE-CEREMONY

To graduate and participate in Commencement, you must complete all degree requirements. You may monitor progress toward your degree or certificate by regularly checking your education plan in MyEdPlan. It is also strongly recommended that you meet with a counselor to ensure degree requirements are being met.

☐ APPLY FOR GRADUATION
- In order to be eligible for graduation, you must officially apply by submitting a Graduation Petition to the Admissions & Records Office by the appropriate deadline.
- Verify that the permanent address listed in Corsair Connect is accurate or you should make any necessary changes no later than two weeks after the ceremony so you may get your Diploma by mail. F1 status students no longer in the USA should contact their evaluator to arrange for their diploma to be mailed internationally.

☐ BUY YOUR GRADUATION SUPPLIES
- Once Admissions & Records determines you are eligible to graduate, you will receive an email invitation to participate in the Commencement Ceremony giving you instructions to purchase your graduation supplies.
- Caps, gowns, and honor sashes will be on sale in the SMC Bookstore beginning May 1. Bachelor’s degree graduates will rent the cap and gown through Admissions & Records.
- Graduates designated as honor students may purchase the honor sashes at the Bookstore with the email invitation sent by Admissions & Records authorizing the purchase.
- Graduation announcements and assorted gifts are also available at the Bookstore.
PAY ANY FEES OWED & UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS

- An unpaid balance will not restrict you from participating in the Commencement ceremony. However, it will preclude you from receiving your diploma and transcripts noting the degree and honors you received. You are strongly encouraged to satisfy any financial account balance, prior to your graduation.

- You may view and pay your account balance status by login in to Corsair Connect. You may also pay your fees in person by visiting the Bursar’s Office during their normal office hours.

PREPARE FOR THE COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

Accommodations

- If you need an accommodation due to a disability to participate in any of the Graduation Day events, please contact Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS) at (310) 434-4265 at least 5 business days in advance. All arrangements must be made through DSPS.

Wear Your Academic Regalia (Cap & Gown) at Commencement

- Commencement ceremonies convey the scholarly tradition and formal tone befitting of an academic ceremony. As such, Santa Monica College is guided by the American Council on Education’s Academic Costume Code. Traditional academic regalia must be worn by all graduating students and faculty participating in the Commencement ceremony. If you choose to participate in Commencement, students obtaining an Associate degree or Certificate of Achievement must purchase their cap and gown from the SMC Bookstore. Students graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Interaction Design must rent their regalia through the Admissions & Records Office. Students are not permitted to use non-SMC regalia.

- Decorated caps may be worn during the ceremony. SMC reserves the right of refusing participation in the ceremony if the cap violates provisions of the SMC Rules for Student Conduct or the Honor Code.

- You may wear SMC-approved/sponsored stoles, sashes, chords, pins, or medals given to you by the sponsoring department or special program.

Ceremony Etiquette

- In order to maintain a safe and positive environment for all graduates, if you are participating in the ceremony, please review the SMC Graduation webpage (www.smc.edu/graduation) to familiarize yourself with the policies in place for Commencement.
You will be asked to verify your understanding of the Commencement Promise when you RSVP to participate in the ceremony. Students and guests may be removed from the ceremony if they violate Commencement policies.

You are encouraged to share information about guest expectations with your family and friends prior to the ceremony. Information such as arrival times, parking, mobility impaired accommodations, and more may be found on the SMC Graduation webpage.

The Ceremony will be streamed live at www.smc.edu and at alumni.smc.edu. Share this information with family and friends who cannot accompany you in person.

Security

Santa Monica College has implemented security measures to ensure the safety of all participants and guests at Commencement. Please listen to and follow directions from event personnel, security, and College Police officers. If you have security concerns during the ceremony, please get the attention of an event staff member.
COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY DAY INSTRUCTIONS FOR GRADUATES

PRE-ARRIVAL INSTRUCTIONS

☐ Review our Graduation FAQs video before Commencement.

☐ You must be at the SMC Pavilion by 4:00 PM in order to check-in and receive your name card for the ceremony. Please check-in at the designated table based on your last name. A photo identification is required. You absolutely must arrive no later than 4:45 PM. Late-arrivals will be turned away.

☐ A photographer will be available to take a free individual picture or with your graduating friends. Photo booths will close at 4:45 PM.

☐ Only graduating students may participate and must wear the SMC graduation cap and gown.

☐ DO NOT LOSE THE NAME CARD as it will be used to call your name on stage at the ceremony. You will also need it so our photographer, Grad Images, may send you your photo proofs. You are not obligated to purchase the photos.

☐ Do not bring any valuables to the ceremony. Purses and backpacks cannot be carried. You may check-in small items for safe-keeping (guarded by College Police staff) at the Pavilion. Items can be picked up immediately following the ceremony (no later than 8:45 pm as the Pavilion will close at this time).

☐ Friends and family cannot accompany you at the Pavilion. They should go directly to the Corsair Field and take their seats.
GETTING READY FOR THE PROCESSIONAL

- Graduates will be asked to sit down around 4:45 PM so that event staff may go over Processional and Ceremony details. Photo booths will be closed at this time.

- You will be asked to line up in two separate lines. One line will enter Corsair Field, where the ceremony is held, from the north gate and the other line will enter from the south gate. If you requested a special accommodation, please line up at the front of the line heading north. Signs will point you to each line.

- Bachelor’s degree graduates will line up at the front of both lines but will sit all together once at Corsair Field. Students graduating with an Associate Degree or a Certificate of Achievement will follow.

- Wear your cap and keep your tassel on the right side.

- Marshals will lead each line to Corsair Field. Once at Corsair Field, Pomp and Circumstance will play in the background and the streaming of the ceremony will start. Marshals will tell you where to sit and will fill one row at a time at the Corsair Field bleachers. Watch the rows as you are sitting down to ensure you are not leaving space between you and the next graduate.

- Sit down as soon as you arrive at your seat in the bleachers.

GRADUATION CEREMONY—ORDER OF EVENTS

- The Commencement program will be available online at our Graduation webpage and on the SMCGO app a few days prior to the ceremony. A printed program will be given to you and your guests.

- Introductory remarks will be made and the Pledge of Allegiance will formally start the ceremony. Men take off their caps for the pledge and replace them afterward. Women keep their caps on throughout.

- At a point during the ceremony, you will be asked to come receive your “diploma.”

- Process onto the stage at the signal of the Marshal. Students on the right side of the stage (facing the stage) will turn to their right and will proceed out their aisle and onto the stage. Students on the left side of the bleachers (facing the stage) will turn to their left and will proceed out their aisle and onto the stage.

- The official college photographer will take your photo with an SMC diploma case as you get close to the stage.
Once on the stage, hand your NAME/POTO CARD to the faculty member reading the names.

You will receive your diploma case from a member of the SMC Board of Trustees (you will get your diploma by mail within 3 months).

Receive the diploma with your left hand, pause, smile, and shake hands.

When you reach the center of the stage, the College President will also shake your hand.

Before proceeding down the stairs, face the audience, change your tassel from right to left.

Once at the bottom of the stairs, you will receive a pin from the SMC Alumni Association. Return to your original seat in the bleachers (or your designated seat).

You must remain seated throughout the ceremony and must follow the direction of the marshals.

At any point during the ceremony, if you exhibit signs of physical impairment due to the influence of drugs, alcohol, or other substances, you may be asked to leave. If you are suddenly feeling unwell and need assistance, please call the Marshal near your area for assistance.

AFTER THE CEREMONY

The College President will announce the conclusion of the ceremony, at which point students may leave the bleachers to meet with their family and friends.

A reception with light hors d’oeuvres hosted by the SMC Foundation and the Alumni Association will be held immediately after the ceremony in the Quad.

Families can meet you after the recessional at Corsair Field or at the Quad for photos with you and your families and friends.

Corsair Field will close soon after the ceremony concludes. You will not be able to go back once the gates close.
GUEST INFORMATION

PARKING, DIRECTIONS, RESTROOMS

- Parking and Directions: Parking will be free at the Santa Monica College Main Campus on Graduation Day. The Corsair Field stadium is located on the southwest side of the campus along 16th Street, between Pearl Street and Pico Boulevard. We recommend you park in Parking Lot 3, which is closest to the Corsair Field. For directions to our campus and for a campus map go to www.smc.edu/map. Be sure to select “Main Campus.”

- Restrooms: Restrooms are located at the Corsair Field stadium on the ground level underneath the guest seating.

YOUR GUESTS

- Admission is free. Tickets are not required.

- The entrance gates to Corsair Field will open at 4:00 pm. They are located on 16th Street, between Pico Blvd., and Pearl St.

- Select vendors will be available in proximity to Corsair Field to purchase flowers and other graduation gifts. Food trucks and water stations will be available.

- Encourage your guests to arrive no later than 5:30 pm and to dress appropriately for the weather.

Webcast: If your family or friends cannot join you in person, we will be streaming the ceremony live on the internet at www.smc.edu and at alumni.smc.edu. Please share this URL with them!

Disability Accommodations: Seating for individuals with a disability (and one guest) is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Guests requiring accessible seating should enter through Gates 1 and 5. The bleachers at the stadium are not wheelchair accessible. Wheelchair accommodations are available adjacent to the stage.

GRADUATION CEREMONY CODE OF CONDUCT

- Please follow any directions given to you by our graduation marshals.

- Illegal substances and alcoholic beverages are prohibited. SMC is a smoke-free campus.

Violators will be removed from the premises and students will be referred to Student Judicial Affairs.
Congratulations!
SMC is proud of you.