



## **Undergraduate Council**

### **Undergraduate Commencement Speaker Process, Criteria, and Guidelines**

Each semester a member of the undergraduate graduating class is chosen to represent their class as the student speaker at the commencement ceremonies. Seniors who are eligible to participate in the May 2020 ceremony are invited to become candidates for this distinctive honor.

#### **Process:**

1. Candidates prepare a qualifying speech to be submitted by **Friday, February 7, 2020**. Submissions should be sent to Betsy Kienitz at [Betsy.Kienitz@unco.edu](mailto:Betsy.Kienitz@unco.edu) and must include the following:
  - a. **Your speech**, which should be no longer than 3 minutes in delivery length. It must be typewritten and double-spaced.
  - b. **The Student Speaker Application**, which serves as a cover page.
  - c. **Two academic letters of reference**.
  - d. **Your resume** that outlines your campus and community involvement.
2. Candidates are highly encouraged to choose a faculty or staff mentor who will provide initial feedback about the speech prior to submission.
3. A committee comprised of UNC staff, faculty, and students will evaluate the written speeches and will select finalists. Committee members may offer suggestions for revision at this time.
4. Finalists will be invited to present their speeches to the committee. The committee will then select the primary and runner-up speakers. The Dean of Students Office will notify all candidates of the final decisions.
5. The selected candidates will be encouraged to further develop their speech and to practice their delivery with the assistance of UNC faculty and/or staff.

#### **Criteria:**

1. Content –
  - a. Creativity, originality, and clarity of message
  - b. Ability to communicate the spirit of the day. Does the speaker eloquently represent the graduating class?
  - c. Appropriateness for graduation and for all audience members
2. Delivery –
  - a. Speech length (approximately five minutes)
  - b. Connection with audience (eye contact, body language)
  - c. Style (appropriate volume; formal, yet conversational)
  - d. Grammatically correct

## **Guidelines or Tips for Graduation Speeches:**

*Your aim is to thank people who should be thanked, to motivate your peers for the future, to remember and reminisce, to touch on shared emotions, and to say farewell.*

1. Be clear, fun, focused, and concise.
2. Be inclusive. You are representing your entire class. Talk about yourself but not only yourself.
3. Tell stories that your audience (fellow graduates, faculty, staff, family, friends) can identify with and can recognize as symbolic of shared experiences.
4. Talk about some major events or activities. At the same time, be careful of inside jokes that might leave some confused.
5. Talk about values that UNC has fostered in you and why they should matter to fellow graduates.
6. Do not say anything negative, and don't try to make a political statement; this is not the time.
7. Avoid clichés and too many quotes.
8. One effective general pattern uses a chronological approach: past (what we've shared), present (where we are now), and future (where we are going).
9. Another effective general pattern is to address the following three topics:
  - a. Congratulations and shared accomplishments: As members of the Class of 2020, what obstacles did you overcome? What are your significant accomplishments? These should apply to you and your peers.
  - b. Gratitude: family members, friends, faculty, staff all should be acknowledged and thanked. They are proud of you and appreciate being associated with your success.
  - c. Challenge: The word *commencement* denotes a *beginning*. Share some inspirational thoughts that express your conviction that you and your classmates are prepared and ready for the challenges that lie before you.

**Deadline to submit speech and application materials:  
Friday, February 7, 2020**