

GRADUATION

SPRING 2021



THE ORACLE

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The ins and outs of the 2021 spring commencement



Leda Alvim

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Questions surrounding the 2021 spring graduations have floated around Facebook groups and group chats since the in-person events were announced, so it's time to clear the air about this year's commencement.

As of April 23, 3,000 students have registered to attend graduation. The ceremonies, scheduled May 8 at 9 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., will feature speeches from USF President Steven Currall as well as Provost Ralph Wilcox and will last approximately 2.5 hours.

Both ceremonies, held at the Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, will be divided by colleges. The 9 a.m. ceremony will honor graduates from the colleges of Behavioral and Community Sciences, Business, Education, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Public Health while the 6:30 p.m. ceremony will feature graduates from the colleges of Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Global Sustainability, Graduate Studies, Marine Science, the Arts and the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

Without the traditional walk across the stage, graduates will be able to stand at their seats and have their names read aloud during the in-person spring commencement ceremonies.

Cvent, the commencement's



With up to two guests in tow, graduating students will get to celebrate their accomplishments May 8 at Tropicana Field so long as they registered to attend beforehand and follow proper health and safety guidelines during the ceremonies. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/USF

software company managing tickets, will be supplying each graduate with two tickets each, both of which are nontransferable. Graduates will not need to take any extra steps to secure their guest tickets as they will be sent by Cvent prior to the ceremonies, according to university spokesperson Adam Freeman.

"The university is unable to accommodate any additional guest ticket requests. Guest tickets are also nontransferable and should be treated as valuable — once you share your ticket with someone there is nothing you or the university can do to revoke that ticket," the commencement team said.

The commencement team will provide more information regarding guest tickets within the next two weeks. If a student needs

to request accessible seating for any of their guests, they must contact the commencement team to make the appropriate arrangements.

All attendees ages two or older will require a ticket, which will also count toward the students' two-guest limit, according to the commencement team.

As a health precaution, students will be required to complete the USF Daily Symptom Check and provide proof of its completion when they check in at each ceremony.

During the ceremony, all graduates and attendees will be required to wear face masks as well as be seated 6 feet apart to comply with social distancing guidelines.

The venue will also receive a "deep cleaning" between ceremonies to mitigate the

risks of spreading COVID-19, according to Freeman.

While each student will only be allowed to bring two guests during the in-person ceremony, other family members and friends will also get to celebrate the occasion by watching the commencement's livestream on the university's website.

As a souvenir from the big day, graduates' names will be included in the commencement program if they meet certain criteria. Bachelor's and master's students should have applied for graduation on OASIS by their respective deadline set by the Registrar's Office.

Students graduating with their Ph.D. and Ed.D. should have completed their Electronic Thesis and Dissertation submission by the Graduate Studies Office deadline while students with

doctorates in Audiology, Business Administration, Physical Therapy, Nursing Practice, Pharmacy and Public Health must meet their program's specific requirements for inclusion in the program.

The students' privacy settings on their student records will also decide whether their name will be on the program or not.

"It is important to note that a student's name not appearing in the program does not necessarily mean they are not graduating — it could be just a reflection of missing the deadline and/or not having granted the university permission to publish their name," the commencement team said.

The commencement programs will be handed out during both ceremonies. If there are any leftovers available, they will be distributed to each campus after the event.

Students who decide not to attend the May 8 ceremonies due to health and safety concerns will be given the chance to attend the makeup commencement for the spring, summer and fall 2020 classes who had their ceremonies postponed. The dates, however, have not been determined yet. The university will provide more updates about makeup commencement when more information becomes available.

After throwing their caps and celebrating their accomplishments to the sound of "Pomp and Circumstance," graduates can expect to receive their valuable, and long-awaited diploma through the mail approximately six to eight weeks after the end of the spring semester.

From stage to screen: tips and tricks to make the most of virtual graduation



Angela Cordoba Perez

STAFF WRITER

While USF spring 2021 graduates won't be walking the stage to receive their diplomas and many will be celebrating commencement virtually, that doesn't mean they aren't able to commemorate this special day from home.

The university announced plans for an in-person commencement for spring 2021 graduates, scheduled to take place May 8 at Tropicana Field, which will also be livestreamed for students and families who don't feel comfortable attending due to health concerns.

The unusual circumstances for a graduation don't imply that this day shouldn't be celebrated with the excitement that comes with it. Hopefully, the following list will inspire graduates to make their virtual commencement memorable.

Decorate and set the mood

Maybe you won't be in St. Petersburg surrounded by all the green and gold decorations, but you can certainly make your place look like a commencement celebration is about to happen.

Decorating with balloons, graduation signs and streamers that you can order from Amazon or get at stores such as Walmart or Party City can certainly add a celebratory mood to your house or apartment. Even if you are alone, decorations can set the



To have fun during virtual commencement, students should put on their best attire, prepare their favorite foods and get ready to celebrate their big achievement from the comfort of their own homes. UNSPLASH/Adi Goldstein

scene for this day.

Celebrate with food

Many can agree that the right food enhances any celebration. You can buy snacks or even order appetizers from your favorite restaurant to eat during the ceremony. A graduation cake, cupcakes, cookies or any treats that can be personalized for the occasion can also be a great accompaniment to commencement.

Placing an order for dinner to have it ready after the livestream is over is a good idea to save time and ensure you can enjoy your favorite meal. If your relatives are in the mood to celebrate at a restaurant, you could make a

reservation at your preferred place to make sure you get a table.

Dress to impress

This is your opportunity to show off your best clothes, and you don't want to miss it. Maybe it's time to wear that outfit you were saving for a special occasion, because this day is certainly worthy of it. You can even post a selfie or two on social media to show off your hard work to friends and family.

Even if the commencement will be experienced virtually, it's likely you will remember the day you graduated, so you might as well remember how good you looked.

■ See CELEBRATION on PAGE 12

Graduate school offers students a way to master their trades



Emma Lail

CORRESPONDENT

As soon-to-be-graduates prepare to start the job hunt, many might face the challenge of obtaining a high-paying job without certain credentials that go beyond a bachelor's degree. To rise above the competition, some students choose to stack up degrees.

Once a student graduates, there are many pathways that can be taken to attain success, such as going straight into the workforce, taking a gap year, becoming an intern or jumping into a graduate program.

Becoming a graduate student can be beneficial in more ways than one. It can provide a mass amount of insight, experience and education beyond a bachelor's degree by pushing students to their academic limits and allowing them to explore their chosen subject in depth.

Extending one's collegiate career is a path some students decide to take, as 16.5% of college graduates make the decision to continue their education and receive a higher degree, according to College Graduation Statistics by Educational Data.

Students who complete college with a master's are more attractive to a future employer compared to a colleague who may only have a bachelor's degree. Graduate students are

getting noticed frequently in today's job market.

Those who continue their education to earn a graduate degree are known to earn 28% more than those with a bachelor's, according to a 2021 metadata research study by Georgetown University.

The skills gained in graduate school such as critical thinking, higher-level problem solving and effective communication are applicable skills that can help with any career avenue.

The number of graduate students within the USF community is significantly smaller than the number of undergraduate students. The total number of graduate students at USF in the 2020-21 academic year is 9,634 whereas undergraduate is at an enrollment of 37,207. The smaller class size means that while taking a graduate program, students will be introduced to several like-minded individuals that will gain a stronger and more efficient connection.

Pursuing graduate school presents students with a small connected group of people. Compared to undergraduate lectures, graduate courses are offered with only a small amount of seats to fill. Undergraduate classes are frequently larger and less individualized compared to graduate courses, according to Study in the USA.

Various benefits arise from a smaller sized class, including gaining connections quicker, developing a relationship with a professor and being more involved in the material being

■ See DEGREES on PAGE 10

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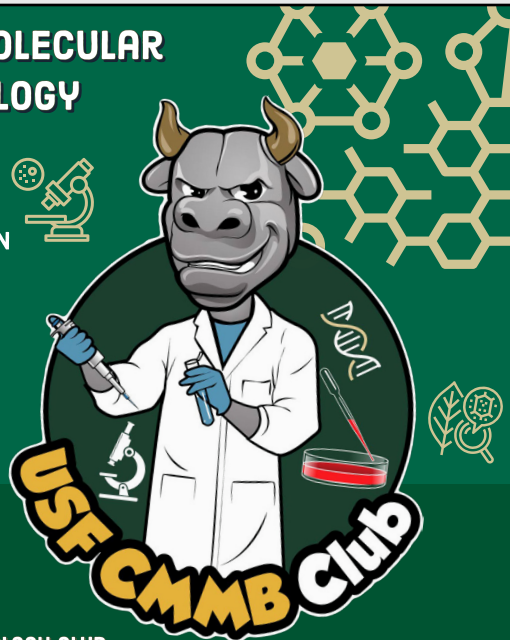
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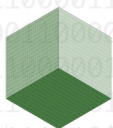
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Picturesque places for graduation photos



Dylan Cohen

CORRESPONDENT

With graduation coming in two weeks, USF students in the Tampa Bay area may be looking for ways to preserve this milestone in their lives with photos.

However, this can be a daunting task for some. Coordinating outfits, finding a photographer and a good location to shoot all serve as roadblocks to overcome in an effort to get the perfect picture. Luckily, below are some suggestions for places to commemorate the occasion.

Lettuce Lake Park

Lettuce Lake Park is a short drive away from the USF Tampa campus, down Fletcher Avenue. Graduates can take their photos on the boardwalk overlooking the Hillsborough River, which flows through the park, with algae and duckweed coating the



Just less than three miles away from the Tampa campus, Lettuce Lake Park features the perfect scenario for outdoor grad pictures in the nature. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

water's surface.

The tall trees can create some captivating shadows as the sun gets filtered through the numerous branches. Some local fauna may also show up in the background like turtles, birds and, if you're lucky, a sunbathing alligator.

The park has a \$2 entry fee per vehicle and is open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day in the spring and summer.

Tampa Riverwalk

The Tampa Riverwalk is a popular destination located in downtown Tampa. Another waterfront location, this spot might be more enticing to those looking for a more urbanized feel to their photos.

The Tampa Museum of Art provides a sleek aesthetic alongside the city skyline. At night, the Riverwalk is dazzling with a collection of lights on the archways and bridges of the Riverwalk, creating the perfect mood lighting.

Vinoy Park in St. Petersburg

Vinoy Park, located in St. Petersburg, is a good mix



Whether it be along the Tampa Riverwalk or next to a stunning statue in Vinoy Park, the Tampa Bay area offers dazzling destinations for the perfect commencement photos. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/USF

of a natural landscape with downtown scenery. The park provides yet another waterfront view, with downtown St. Petersburg in the background, but also an abundance of palm trees.

With little shading, it's a great location for a windswept look or for those looking to soak up some of the sun's rays. With a few art sculptures scattered throughout the park and a passing view of boats coming into the bay, Vinoy Park is a good place for any graduates of USF St. Pete, or students of other campuses willing to make the scenic drive.

Lido Beach in Sarasota

Lido Beach in Sarasota gives a more somber and meditative vibe to photos. It is a popular place for maternity and engagement photos due to the lesser amounts of people that go, allowing for an easier photoshoot experience and less risk of getting photobombed.

It can offer good reflective photography for the graduates,

with foggy cargo ships in the background and flowing waves providing a good way for the graduate to reflect on their journey and time that led them

to this very moment. While out of the way, this spot can be good for graduates of USF Sarasota-Manatee, or those looking for a

■ See GRAD PHOTOS on PAGE 12



Any Sarasota-Manatee student who loves the beach can do a quick drive to Lido Beach and get a beautiful scenery for their graduation pictures. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/ Alain Secretan

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DEGREES

Continued from PAGE 5

taught. Building relationships while being a graduate student can help evolve your network. Not only are connections being made with other driven and motivated students but with professionals and faculty as well.

USF offers over 150 master's, specialist and doctoral-level degrees as well as over 100 different graduate certificates that can be completed both online and in person. The variety of programs offered for a master's degree and what they consist of can be found on the Office of Graduate Studies' website.

Many of these majors offered at USF ranked nationwide in the 2021 U.S. News and World Report Graduate School Rankings, with 10 graduate programs including audiology, physical therapy and nursing ranked in the top 50 as well as five online graduate degree programs in the top 100. This allows students not only to

further their education, but to do so within nationally recognized programs.

Each student will have to apply through the USF graduate application link to begin taking courses and starting a graduate program.

The deadline to apply for graduate school for the fall semester at all campuses is June 1, the spring semester deadline is Oct. 15 and the summer 2022 deadline is Feb. 15.

Students from all USF campuses can have the opportunity to endeavor in furthering their education in any way they decide.

Becoming a graduate student to earn a master's degree can open up several doors. Potential benefits that can come from taking this step further educationally can consist of an increase in job opportunities, earning a higher paycheck and gaining stronger credibility.

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With graduation right around the corner, students have the opportunity to extend their collegiate career by applying to and attending graduate school. UNSPLASH/ Tom Hermans

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**Florida
HEALTH**

GRAD PHOTOS

Continued from PAGE 9



The most iconic spot to take graduation pictures is on top of the bronze bulls near the Marshall Student Center. Bring some confetti and pop a champagne bottle to get the perfect shots. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/USF

weekend getaway to take their graduation photos.

Murals

The numerous murals in downtown Tampa and St. Petersburg are beautiful backgrounds for any graduate. While there is no shortage of these, the pure variety, artistic skill and colors featured provides enough incentive to pose in front of at least one. Murals are a way to provide a vibrant splash of color to an otherwise dreary brick backdrop and are sure to spice up any graduation photos.

USF Campuses

Last but certainly not least, no series of graduation photos is complete without a few signature shots in front of the bronze bull. Students can pose in front of their favorite locations on the campuses they spent so

much time on leading up to their graduation. Tampa campus students need to pose at the fountain in Martin Luther King Jr. plaza as well as the iconic Bull U logo.

On the St. Pete campus, graduates can take pictures right along the water with dolphins and manatees joining in the graduation photo festivities.

For Sarasota-Manatee students, the stunning architecture of the campus along with the beautiful fountains in the courtyard allow for the action shots that every grad should include in their celebratory collections.

While graduation can be a hectic and stressful time, hopefully some of these places suggested can be a good getaway from the hustle and bustle and give USF graduates a way to get out and see the best sites of the Tampa Bay area and celebrate their accomplishments.

CELEBRATION

Continued from PAGE 5

Plan a virtual celebration with relatives

This is a moment of celebration and you will probably want to share it with family and friends. The perk about having the virtual celebration is that your guests are not limited to a location. You can invite those cousins who live in another state or your friend who moved to another country to join the celebration.

No matter where your guests are, they can join the festivities through platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Send them virtual invitations that you can create in Canva or get on websites like Paperless Post and tell them to join you on this special day.

The virtual party might be a chance to catch up with people you haven't seen in a long time and you might even make some time for speeches. If you want to get more creative, have someone in your home hand you a diploma during the meeting to commemorate the event. You could create one online and print it if you haven't gotten the official one.



Gather the family around for a safe gathering to celebrate your accomplishments while watching the commencement livestream. UNSPLASH/ Mohammad Shahhosseini

Keep your memories in pictures

After all the hard work you put into this degree, you will probably want to remember the day it was celebrated. Take pictures with your sash, gown and cap if you have one, as well as with your decorations, diploma and those you are celebrating with, even if it is the screenshot of a Zoom call.

Enjoy

Last but not least, this is your graduation day, and the most important thing is that you recognize and applaud yourself. No matter if you do a fancy or simple meeting, if you will be alone or with company, this day marks the end of countless hours of studying and effort you put into your degree and you deserve to enjoy. After all, you don't have your commencement every day.



Celebrate and enjoy the moment with your loved ones. Don't let the occasion go without a special toast and the opportunity to create unforgettable memories. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/ Christine Jou

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