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# Georgia Southern virtual graduation is a star-studded celebration of students

May 5, 2020



With a trumpet serenade from Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy ('75), congratulations messages from high-profile alumni, and a special note from country music star Cole Swindell, Georgia Southern University has created a star-studded virtual commencement ceremony to celebrate more than 4,300 Spring 2020 graduates.

When COVID-19 health concerns forced all University System of Georgia institutions to cancel their graduation ceremonies, Georgia Southern staff quickly mobilized to brainstorm alternatives.

Organizers wanted to make the ceremony personal to each graduate and also make it memorable. It needed to be distinguished, meaningful and appropriately celebrate the students' work and success.



The result is a video being produced for each college that will include a slide on the screen listing each graduate's name, their degree, and — for those who submitted it — their picture and a “thank you” to special supporters. As the names appear on screen, viewers will hear a faculty member read each student's name, just as would happen in a regular ceremony.

In addition to the students' names, the video will include the national anthem, the alma mater, remarks from the university president, the provost and the college dean, and some heartfelt pre-recorded messages from alumni and Georgia Southern supporters. Contributors include U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, Miami Dolphins Running Back Matt Breida ('16) and Inspector General of the U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Leslie C. Smith ('85).



“Until we can meet again in person, I hope this virtual ceremony will be special for our graduates,” said Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero. “Our world has changed significantly in the last few months, but one thing has remained constant: our commitment to our students. I’m very proud of how our exceptional faculty and staff have responded with innovative ideas such as this.”



The videos are being produced by the University's Multimedia Development Center, led by Emmy award-winning Director Art Berger. His team is editing together more than 4,000 slides with graduate names and combining them with the recorded remarks.



“This has been a great project to work on,” Berger said. “Normally, we would be working on broadcasting Eagle sports right now, so these virtual commencements have been a nice way to feel like we are still connected to the students, give back to our students and families and create a unique virtual experience for them.”

The schedule for the ceremonies is:

- Friday, May 8 at 9 a.m.: Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing
- Friday, May 8 at 11 a.m.: College of Arts and Humanities
- Friday, May 8 at 1 p.m.: College of Behavioral and Social Sciences
- Friday, May 8 at 3 p.m.: College of Education
- Saturday, May 9 at 9 a.m.: College of Science and Mathematics
- Saturday, May 9 at 11 a.m.: Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health
- Saturday, May 9 at 1 p.m.: Parker College of Business
- Saturday, May 9 at 3 p.m.: Waters College of Health Professions

Each ceremony will be live-streamed on the [University's Facebook page](#) and through the commencement website at [GeorgiaSouthern.edu/Commencement](http://GeorgiaSouthern.edu/Commencement). Each ceremony will also be archived on the commencement site.

University officials still hope to announce a rescheduled date for in-person ceremonies for Spring 2020 graduates. Those who do not participate in the rescheduled ceremony are invited to participate in the Dec. 11 and 12 commencement exercises.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/R2 institution founded in 1906, offers 141 degree programs serving more than 26,000 students through nine colleges on three campuses in Statesboro,

Savannah, Hinesville and online instruction. A leader in higher education in southeast Georgia, the University provides a diverse student population with expert faculty, world-class scholarship and hands-on learning opportunities. Georgia Southern creates lifelong learners who serve as responsible scholars, leaders and stewards in their communities. Visit [GeorgiaSouthern.edu](https://GeorgiaSouthern.edu).

Tags: [Spring Commencement](#)