

Dear campus community,

Just as the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected how we offer courses, how we spend our time and how we connect as a community, it also has affected one of Western Oregon University's most cherished traditions: Commencement.

After deep deliberation, **the university has decided to present the 163rd Commencement Ceremony as a virtual event, allowing us to celebrate this important milestone and provide recognition of our students' hard work and perseverance.**

The virtual ceremony will take place at the originally scheduled Commencement time of 10 a.m. June 13. The web-based ceremony will still include addresses from President Fuller and our outstanding student honorees; in addition, customized information about participating grads will be viewable on demand by all "attendees." In advance of the ceremony, **each graduate will receive by mail a commencement program book, a mortarboard (graduation cap), tassel and diploma cover. Diplomas will be mailed to graduates during the summer.**

We are extremely disappointed we cannot safely have a live ceremony, an event that traditionally has been the high point of each academic year. However, we believe hosting a virtual ceremony at the scheduled time is a better alternative than postponement because we want to celebrate with students and their families during graduation season. We are considering a possible recognition event at Homecoming 2020 in October and will have more details in the future if we move forward with that plan.

We've heard from many students and families who are trying to book travel arrangements for a graduation ceremony. In deference to everyone's ability to plan during these uncertain times, we decided to make the decision regarding a virtual ceremony now rather than wait indefinitely to see whether the pandemic situation improved. Almost all other Oregon public universities have made similar announcements about their commencements.

We recognize that the disruption caused by COVID-19 has touched every aspect of life and that this is not the commencement that graduates, their families and their friends were expecting. However, we hope a virtual ceremony and possible Homecoming event will allow graduates to celebrate their great achievements at WOU during this unprecedented time in history.

We look forward to standing with all our graduates each year and being a part of this significant life milestone. Although current events prevent us from gathering in person, we remain extremely proud of all that our graduates have accomplished because together we succeed.

Sincerely,



Rex Fuller
President
Western Oregon University
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Virtual Commencement FAQs

Does not having a Commencement ceremony impact my ability to graduate?

No, Commencement is a ceremony recognizing graduates. Actual graduation is the awarding of a degree upon completion of requirements.

Why are you holding it online instead of postponing it?

We wanted to celebrate with students during commencement season. In addition, when researching virtual commencement options, we were impressed by how we could create an opportunity to truly honor our graduates and their accomplishments in a personalized way.

Why did you decide this now instead of waiting to see if the pandemic improved?

We also didn't want students and their families to have to make plans that would likely need to be canceled. Almost all other Oregon public universities have made similar announcements about their ceremonies.

Can I still order Commencement items such as announcements and a cap and gown?

Yes, you can order these items online to be shipped to you. We encourage you to wear your regalia during the ceremony and in the photograph that you upload for the virtual ceremony. The Wolfstore will have additional information soon about how to order items. We will be sending a complimentary cap and tassel to 2020 grads.

When will I get my diploma?

Diplomas are mailed after the university verifies that your degree requirements are met, typically within two weeks of the end of the term.

Will I still get a diploma case?

Diploma cases will be mailed to students.

Can I attend a future in-person ceremony?

If gatherings are allowable and advisable, WOU is working to provide a physical celebration at Homecoming in the fall.

What will happen with department or group ceremonies such as Lavender Graduation?

There will be virtual options for university-recognized alternate ceremonies. More details will come from the departments that host those events.

Will OHSU students get to participate in the virtual ceremony?

Yes.