



DATE: January 12, 2018
TO: Cabinet Members and Academic Deans
FROM: Sheila M. Stearns, President 
RE: Change in Commencement Ceremony for 2018

As many of you know, many years ago UM moved to a central Commencement ceremony for certain events, with the primary distribution of diploma covers to baccalaureate and Missoula College graduates done through dispersed ceremonies around campus.

Ever since I observed last Commencement, I have been researching the advantages and disadvantages of Commencement models. I have invited comment from students, deans, faculty, Cabinet members, and parents and family members who have been through various types with children and friends who graduate from different universities. I have consulted with incoming President Bodnar and he agrees with my assessment and recommendations.

Based on a trove of information, research, and feedback, I hereby direct that planning begin immediately for two central ceremonies – the first at 9:30 a.m. and the second at 2:00 p.m. – in the Adams Center on Saturday, May 12, 2018. This year (and in even years in the future), the graduates from our professional schools will go through the morning ceremony, while the graduates from the College of Humanities and Sciences and Missoula College will go through the afternoon ceremony. The opposite will be true for odd years. Each graduate will cross the stage and shake the hand of the President of the University of Montana. Each graduate will be pictured on the screen above the Adams Center Floor, be greeted and congratulated by the Dean of their school or college, and have their picture taken as they depart the stage. The number and length of speaking parts will be reduced.

The only weather risk is heat; other uncertainty and considerable set-up costs will be eliminated, with significant savings. Joe Hickman, Chuck Maes, and Rebecca Power will again serve as tri-chairs and will work together to ensure a traditional ceremony with pomp and circumstance. The ceremony can be both efficient and celebratory, with a designated space for families with small children to retreat to as needed, with a timeline of two hours, plus 15 minutes for the processional. Starting this year, and going forward, they will rely more heavily on assistance from representatives from University Relations and the Provost's Office.

Departments, schools, and colleges that in the last few years have developed individual ceremonies should instead plan for events or open houses, preferably on Friday afternoon, without regalia or diploma covers, and without need for special set-up by Facilities Services. Provost Beverly Edmond and Graduate Dean Scott Whittenburg will consult with the Deans and Registrar to advise on the particulars of the hooding ceremony for doctoral candidates.

Office of the President

In addition to the changes to the spring ceremony, President Bodnar plans to add an annual ceremony in the Adams Center in December. Many institutions hold mid-year ceremonies that are appreciated by graduates and their families.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and creativity in regard to this change. **Please share this information with the departments in your respective sector/college/school.**

SMS/rp
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Cc: Commencement Planning Committee Members