



Commencement Speaker Information Packet

Celebrate your achievements. Share your experience. Shine in the moment.

Congratulations! If you're reading this it means you're considering auditioning for one of the student speaker roles at graduation. This packet contains materials that will guide you through the audition process.

Speaker Roles

There are three student roles for which you can audition: Student Speaker, Coordinator of Ceremony, and Invocator. When you audition, you will be considered for each of these roles! You only need to make one appointment in the Media Hub this will cover Student Speaker and Coordinator of Ceremony.

Student Speaker

The Student Speaker speaks to and on behalf of her sister grads. Your remarks should be celebratory and focus on accomplishments, appreciations, and aspirations. The core idea of your speech should be sharply focused, clearly organized, and well supported. Length: 5-7 minutes.

Coordinator of Ceremony

The Coordinator of Ceremony serves as the emcee for graduation. As Coordinator, you will address the audience several times throughout commencement. You will open and close the ceremony, introduce dignitaries, faculty, guests, and speakers, and keep the ceremony moving along.

Invocator

The Invocator shares a prayer near the beginning of the ceremony invoking God's presence for support, inspiration, and/or wisdom. The prayer needs to be inclusive so that participants of many faith traditions may feel a connection.

Audition Process

Make an appointment with the Media Hub, 414-382-6170, to have your audition(s) taped for the selection committee's review. Auditions must be taped before **November 1, 2019**. There is no need to write an entire speech. Prepare an introduction and the first main point of your remarks.

Selection Process

The Commencement Selection Committee, composed of faculty and staff from several disciplines and departments, will review all the auditions and select the speakers in April (for the May Commencement) and in November (for the December Commencement). If you are chosen, you will work with a faculty coach who will assist you in polishing your remarks and practicing your delivery.

COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY FORMAT

PROCESSIONAL

MARSHAL

Vice President for Student Success

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman, Board of Trustees

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Coordinator of Ceremony

INVOCATION

Student

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

President

ADDRESS

Student Speaker

AWARDING OF DEGREES

CLOSING REMARKS

Coordinator of Ceremony

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman, Board of Trustees

SINGING OF THE ALMA MATER

RECESSIONAL

Tips for the Student Speaker and Coordinator of Ceremony Based upon Criteria for Effective Speaking

From the Graduation Speakers Selection Committee

Those of us who select the Graduation Speakers have listened to many tryouts and attended many graduations. We believe we can assist you by telling you what works – and what doesn't. Here are some tips for you based upon the speaking criteria you're so familiar with.

1. **Speaking on One's Feet**

Although you'll be delivering from a manuscript, neither the script nor the podium should get in the way. In other words, use the delivery skills you've developed at Alverno when speaking extemporaneously. Worst sin: *reading your remarks*.

2. **Connecting with Audience through Establishing of Common Context**

The audience at graduation is there to see someone they love graduate. While generally interested in the "goings on," their primary goal is to hear the name of their loved one as she receives her diploma. Consequently, the audience can bore easily. This can be challenging. Therefore, your remarks must grab and keep the attention of the audience. Worst sin: *excluding portions of your audience*.

3. **Connecting with audience through Verbal Expression**

Use "speaking" language: I, you, we, us; active voice; vivid images; concrete examples. Worst sin: *"Alverno-ese," i.e., Alverno-related jargon such as "externals," "R weekend," "competency," "abilities."*

4. **Connecting with Audience through Delivery**

Your audience will take their cues from you. Therefore, it's vital that you speak in a manner appropriate to your remarks. If you want the audience to smile (or laugh), you should smile. If you'd like the audience to ponder a point, pause. Vary your rate, speak in your natural voice (when nervous, our voices tend toward a higher pitch), and ar-ti-cu-late! Worst sin: *speaking too fast, pausing too little*.

5. **Connecting with Audience through Appropriate Linguistic Conventions**

Use words correctly, pronounce them properly (even if it means spelling them phonetically), and use simple sentence structure that is easily understood. Worst sin: *sentences that are complicated or too long*.

6. **Connecting with Audience through Structure**

Organize your remarks so that the audience can easily grasp your meaning and "see" how your ideas are connected. Use transitional words and phrases (consequently, as a result, etc.) and signposts (first, finally, etc.) to make your speech seamless. Consider using metaphors, similes, or analogies – if they're fresh. Avoid overused, worn-out images, i.e., graduation is merely the end of the one chapter in the book of life; in this journey called "life," graduation is just one rest stop. Worst sin: *organizing remarks around the eight abilities or the letters in "Alverno."*

7. Connecting with Audience through Support and Development

Use a variety of supporting materials (examples, anecdotes, historical references, and stories) and balances of quotes. Cite your resources. When quoting an individual who is not as well-known, briefly explain who that person is and why she/he is credible. Worst sin: *making a point that's not sufficiently supported or well-developed*.

8. Connecting with Audience through Media

You will represent every graduate, and, as such, you will be your own visual aid. Therefore, stand proud and tall, speak with your audience, and remain poised. Worst sin: *apologizing*.

9. Connecting with Audience through Appropriate Content

Understand the difference between the roles of the Student Speaker and the Coordinator of Ceremony. For example, it is the Coordinator's (not the Student Speaker's) responsibility to thank individuals (President) or groups (Board of Trustees).

When deciding upon content, think *substance*. While reflecting upon your years of education is acceptable, try to broaden your perspective. If appropriate, for example, refer to global events.

Don't dwell on student hardships, i.e., late nights, no social life, McDonald's for meals, etc. If hardship must be included, then balance them with some positives.

Humor – if gentle and appropriate – can be helpful. It's a wonderful way to reach the audience.

Remember, you are speaking for every discipline and every graduate – weekday and weekend students of various sizes, shapes, color, and background. Therefore, the speech should not be a review of who you are or what you did. Instead, focus on the shared experience and accomplishments of all the grads. Worst sin: *taking too personal a stroll down memory lane*.

10. Self Assessment

Understand that from the abundance of auditions, only two speakers can be chosen. If you are not one of those two, do not take it personally. Our decision is often difficult because we must choose from so many good speakers. Let the satisfaction of knowing you tried and the pleasure of pulling it all together be your reward. Worst sin: *not trying out*.

Sample of Commencement Speaker Introduction

“The Music in These Walls” by Cassie Powalisz, ‘12

I am honored and pleased to have been given the opportunity to speak on behalf of the December class of 2010. It has taken me ten years to get here, but here I stand. I came to Alverno after my friend, Nicole, told me how happy she was here. At her urging I looked into Alverno. I think you know how that worked out, and I am proud to say we will be crossing this stage together today.

When I first came to Alverno I was struck, and with some force, by the culture of this college. The little things that are uniquely Alverno. I couldn’t believe how professors were willingly called by their first names. I couldn’t believe the accessibility of the staff. I couldn’t believe there were no grades. But most of all I was struck by the music I heard within the walls of this college. I graduate today with a degree in English but it is music that will stay with me long after I leave Alverno.

This music isn’t pianos, or flutes, or an aria. Although you can hear those here and often do. The music that stays with me is the voices of Alverno women. While walking past class rooms I heard intelligent and amazing Alverno women discussing existentialism and pharmacology. I heard Alverno women sincerely asking each other about their kids and classes and relationships. I saw Alverno women tutor and advise one another. I heard words of encouragement and songs of praise. I heard the desires, and goals, and dreams on the lips of every woman I saw.

Sample of Coordinator of Ceremony Introduction

I am Allicia Washington-White, and I am thrilled to be a member of the May graduating class receiving my Bachelor of Arts in English. Today, I hold the honor to serve as your coordinator of ceremony.

Commencement is a special day to **reflect** on our pasts, even though the future isn’t always clear. Now I am quite sure that many of you have looked in the mirror **at least** once today to ensure your hair was ok, your makeup was just right, and your smile is bright as it can possibly be! **(PAUSE)**

While looking at yourself, did you notice your reflection? You are probably thinking by now...of course I did: it’s a mirror! But I mean...did you **really** look at your reflection? Because when I looked in the mirror **today**, I no longer saw the student I was, but the woman that I have become. **(PAUSE)**

Today is the day! Today is the day that we have anticipated! Over the course of every semester, we have wiped away the specks and repaired the cracks, so no longer will that mirror be cloudy. After today, our reflections will show bravery, perseverance, and most of all, (HOUR) strength.