

Sample Speech Guidelines

Review the following 2024 Student Commencement Speaker Guidelines and the attached Sample Commencement Speech to assist you in writing your own speech. If you are selected for an audition (which will be scheduled during the month of April), then you will need to prepare and deliver your own speech to the Selecting Committee.

General Background

1. The speech is for the graduates; this is not just about you. Remember, you are looking back at what you and all graduates have learned at Delta College. You and all the graduates are now prepared to end this journey and move on to another. Talk about shared experiences. Relate these experiences and the skills you have learned to the future and world view... you are now prepared to take on what lies ahead.
2. Humor and/or being lighthearted, this speech is supposed to be fun!
3. Primary message or theme: pick a theme that sums up your overall experience at Delta College and weave it throughout the speech at least three times during the speech at the beginning, middle, and end. Common themes are perseverance, grit, overcoming adversity, the comeback, persistence, achievement, accomplishing goals, future inspiration, gratitude, integrity, shaping the world, making a difference, resilience, setting expectations, mistakes learned, etc.
4. You only have five minutes to deliver the message, so get to the point early.

Writing the Speech

1. Start with an effective attention getter! An effective way to do this is to tell a story that really impacted your life and helped you get to where you are now... this should introduce/connect to your theme. Try to tell a story that would include members of Delta College.
2. Then welcome the Board of Trustees, distinguished faculty, administration, family, friends, and the graduates.
3. Mention an important event or accomplishment relating to the college. For instance, you can mention how Delta College was rated one of the best colleges in the United States by the Aspen Institute or that this graduation is Delta College's 89th Commencement Anniversary.
4. Include things that matter to Delta College and the surrounding community. For example, look at the list of majors we offer and speak to a few of them.
5. Remember to thank the people who really helped you and the graduates like the faculty, counselors, staff, parents, friends, etc. Ask the audience to give a round of applause for them.

Delivery and Practice

1. Sincerity is key. How you deliver this speech is as important as what you say. Seize the moment and speak from the heart.
2. Your speech is going to be five minutes in length, so make each sentence meaningful. Do not throw in fluff or throw away lines. Make it count!
3. Practice the speech to where you know it well enough to deliver it in a conversational style. It should be extemporaneous... practiced and prepared, but the final wording may be different when you deliver it.
4. Deliver your speech in front of the speech coach a few days before commencement. They will time it to make sure it does not go over the time limit, and they will provide you with critical feedback so you can deliver a polished speech.

Help

1. Do not worry; you will work with a speech coach on the final draft and delivery. Relax and enjoy the experience.