



CENTENNIAL COMMENCEMENT

CLASS OF
2026

SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2026

8:45 AM PROCESSIONAL • 9:00 AM CEREMONY

RAIDER STADIUM • ASHLAND, OREGON

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

Thank You

We wish to acknowledge the following organizations for their contributions to the 2026 Commencement.

Color Guard: Oregon National Guard
Honor Guard Team

Eagle Staff: SOU Native American Student Union

Diploma Covers: SOU Alumni Association

Plants: Valley View Nursery

Special thanks to all of the faculty, staff and students who have assisted in today's ceremony.

Academic Robes and Regalia

(Text courtesy of Brian Doyle and Marcus Covert)

The history of academic dress dates back to the Middle Ages when many of the scholars were also clerics and wore the robes of their monastic orders. In 1321, the University of Cambridge adopted specific styles and color combinations for its faculties. American colleges and universities desired to adopt a standard code of academic dress. At a conference held at Columbia University in 1895, representatives from various institutions adopted a code and regulations governing academic dress for colleges and universities in the United States. The standards continue to be followed by the American Council on Education.

The regalia worn today are traditional, and their colors, trimmings, and patterns represent the degree, the field of learning, and the institution which conferred that degree. The bachelor's gown has long pointed sleeves and designed to be worn closed; the master's gown has an oblong sleeve open at the wrist. The rear part of the oblong shape is square cut, and the front part has an arc cut away. The doctor's gown has bell-shaped sleeves, is faced with velvet, and has three bars across the sleeves. The color of the velvet is distinctive to the degree.

The hood also tells a story. The type of degree (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctor's) is indicated by the width of the velvet edging and the length of the hood, the doctor's hood being the longest and of a fuller shape than the others. The color of the velvet edging indicates the field of learning, and the colors of the lining designate the school which conferred the degree. The color of the tassel, worn on the left side of the mortarboard, also indicates the field of study and is gold for those with doctor's degrees.

The colors you will see today in the hoods and gowns of our faculty represent the various fields of learning:

Arts, Letters, Humanities: White

Music: Pink

Business Administration: Drab

Nursing: Apricot

Education: Light Blue

Science: Gold

Fine Arts: Brown

The following are some of the other color symbols you may see at commencement:

Agriculture: Maize

Optometry: Green

Public Health: Salmon Pink

Dentistry: Lilac

Oratory (Speech): Silver

Engineering: Orange

Pharmacy: Olive Green

Social Science: Citron

Forestry: Russet

Philosophy: Royal Blue

Theology: Red

Home Economics: Maroon

Podiatry: Nile Green

Veterinary Science: Steel Gray

Law: Purple

Public Administration: Peacock Blue

Medicine: Hunter Green

Certification of the conferral of a degree is by receipt of a diploma or official transcript noting degree completion, not necessarily participation in the commencement ceremony.

Southern Oregon University is committed to sustainable practices, environmental stewardship, and research that advances our understanding of local, regional, and global environmental issues. Sustainability is a core value at SOU, woven into our academics, operations, and campus culture. Our students, faculty, and staff work together to lead and model innovative solutions that promote a more sustainable future. SOU is proud to be a GOLD-rated university for sustainability in operations, engagement, academics, planning and administration, and innovation, as measured by the STARS evaluation system developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). Our Institute for Applied Sustainability serves as a hub for hands-on learning, interdisciplinary research, and community partnerships that drive real-world impact and empower the next generation of sustainability leaders.

In keeping with Southern Oregon University's commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainability, this booklet is printed on at-least 30% recycled paper. Today's graduates are wearing robes that incorporate sustainable resources. Drinking water is available before and during the ceremony at a number of water stations. Please use reusable water containers whereyou can and put your trash in the appropriate bin. Your participation in helping lower our environmental impact is appreciated!

G R A D U A T E S

We understand the desire to leave once your name is called. The Commencement Ceremony has been intentionally tailored to be very student-centered and as brief as possible. With that, we ask out of respect for your fellow graduates, that you please remain until the end of the ceremony and help celebrate your fellow students. We hope that you will strongly consider staying until the end. Congratulations!

IMPORTANT NOTE ON AVAILABLE CAPTIONING:

Live Captioning will be displayed on monitors in the accessible seating area on the field and in The Hawk, and viewable on any web-enabled device

CART PROVIDED BY KARASCH

**ON-SITE INTERPRETING PROVIDED BY
ELIZABETH SCHEPLER AND ISABELLE TOWER**



Program

Pre-Commencement music in Raider Stadium

Processional (Audience remains seated)

Pomp and Circumstance, March No. 1, by Edward Elgar
Sine Nomine, by Ralph Vaughn Williams

Order of Procession

Faculty Marshals: Tanya Blakeley, Dr. Rene Ordonez, Dr. Shanell Sanchez
Participating University Faculty

Candidates for Degrees

Marshals: Dr. Dan DeNeui, Associate Provost and Director of Graduate
Studies, and Dr. Jen Bratz, University Registrar
Senior Administrators, Academic Deans, and honored guests
Southern Oregon University Board of Trustees

Platform Party

FIRST ROW

Valerie Ing, Jefferson Public Radio, Commencement Orator
Roman Battaglia, Jefferson Public Radio, Commencement Orator
Dr. Richard J. Bailey, Jr., Southern Oregon University President
Dr. Casey Shillam, Executive Vice President and Provost
Sheila Clough, Chair, SOU Board of Trustees
Dr. Carson Howell, Vice President for Finance and Administration
Janet Fratella, Vice President of University Advancement

SECOND ROW

Dr. Dustin Walcher, Dean, School of Business
Andrew Gay, Dean, College of Arts and Humanities
Dr. Jesse Longhurst, Dean, School of Education
Dr. Vincent Smith, Dean, College of Natural and Social Sciences
Dr. Heather Voss, Associate Dean, Oregon Health and Science University

THIRD ROW

Dr. Dan DeNeui, Associate Provost and Director of Graduate Studies
Dr. Jen Bratz, University Registrar
Emily Miller Francisco, Interim Dean of Hannon Library
Sabrina Prudhomme, University Board Secretary
Dr. Carrie Vath, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students

Master of Ceremonies

Dr. Casey Shillam, Executive Vice President and Provost

Singing of the National Anthem

Acacia Cook '26

Remarks from the President

Dr. Richard J. Bailey, Jr., Southern Oregon University President

Student Speaker

Jocelyn Gallegos Vargas '26

Emeritus Faculty

Dr. Mark Siders

Dr. Craig Stillwell

Francine Bostwick

Dr. Patricia Kyle

Lady Vanderlip

Dr. Margaret Perrow

Dr. Vicki Purslow

Dr. Bill Hugues

Steve Wasserman

Dr. Doug Smith

2026 Distinguished Teaching Awards

Tanya Blakeley

2026 Distinguished Service Award

Dr. Rene Ordonez

2026 Distinguished Scholarship Award

Dr. Shanell Sanchez

The Dankook Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Student

Presented by Dr. Dan DeNeui, Associate Provost and Director of Graduate Studies

Maisie Bandel-Ramirez '26

The Universidad de Guanajuato Award for Outstanding Graduate Student

Presented by Dr. Dan DeNeui, Associate Provost and Director of Graduate Studies

Jennifer Weiss '26

PRESENTATION OF DEGREES

Presentation of Candidates for Master's and Baccalaureate Degrees

Dr. Casey Shillam, Executive Vice President and Provost

Conferring of Master's and Baccalaureate Degrees

Dr. Richard J. Bailey, Jr., Southern Oregon University President

INTRODUCTION OF DEGREE RECIPIENTS

Reading of Names of Degree Recipients

Valerie Ing and Roman Battaglia

Greeting of Candidates for Master's and Baccalaureate Degrees

Dr. Dan DeNeui, Associate Provost and Director of Graduate Studies

Dr. Vincent Smith, Dean, College of Natural and Social Sciences

Andrew Gay, Dean, College of Arts and Humanities

Dr. Dustin Walcher, Dean, School of Business

Closing Comments

Recessional

Student Speaker

JOCELYN GALLEGOS VARGAS '26

Jocelyn Gallegos Vargas is graduating with a Bachelors of Arts in Business Administration and Spanish Language and Culture. As a first generation Latina student, she dedicated her time at SOU to leadership, community engagement, and advocacy. She served as president of the Latino Student Union, worked at Rogue Credit Union's campus branch, and participated in the Global Innovation Scholars Program. Following graduation, she will continue her work with Rogue Credit Union as a Community Outreach and Financial Education Coordinator, where she hopes to make financial education and community resources more accessible to others. She extends her heartfelt gratitude to Anne Connor, Dee Carreon, Jonathan Chavez-Baez, and Marvin Woodward for their mentorship, encouragement, and support throughout her academic journey. She is deeply thankful for her parents, siblings, nieces and nephew, and Nathaniel Genereux for their constant love and belief in her.

The Dankook Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Student

MAISIE BANDEL-RAMIREZ

Maisie Bandel-Ramirez is a graduating Honors College senior at Southern Oregon University, dual-majoring in Economics and Power & Politics and member of the SOU wrestling team. Maintaining a 3.98 GPA, Maisie has an outstanding record of academic achievement, having produced exemplary capstone research on the intersections of poverty, time deprivation, and civic engagement. Beyond the classroom, she is an active campus leader and SOU advocate. As the Lead Peer Mentor for the Community Resilience and Leadership Student Fellows program and a key contributor to the Institute for Applied Sustainability, she has organized major campus democracy events, led student advocacy trips to Salem with the Office of Government Relations, and pioneered a blueprint for student-governed, mission-aligned university investments. Celebrated for her exceptional work ethic, inclusivity, and resilience, Maisie leads by example, leaving a foundational legacy of student empowerment and community stewardship at SOU.

The Guanajuato Award for Outstanding Graduate Student

JENNIFER WEISS

Jennifer Weiss is graduating with a Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Over the past year, Jennifer has worked in multiple behavioral health settings, providing counseling, care coordination, and advocacy for vulnerable individuals navigating mental health and substance use challenges. She is highly dedicated to group work and community-based healing, having developed "Sonic Bloom," an evidence-backed therapeutic musical workshop that she created to help reduce anxiety and build connection. Jennifer's extensive career in service spans two decades and includes managing national-level youth mentorship and abuse prevention programming for Big Sisters, co-creating expressive arts curriculum for at-risk youth, and volunteering with a local bedside singing group for hospice patients. Jennifer is committed to expanding access to care, protecting human dignity, and offering creative approaches to building supportive communities for those who need it most.

Distinguished Teaching Awardee

TANYA BLAKELEY, M.S.E.D.

The SOU School of Education's Tanya Blakeley—2026 Distinguished Teaching Award recipient—is an extraordinary teacher of teachers in the Education Studies program, a program which she also leads as Coordinator. Her teaching is hallmarked by innovative course delivery and modeling inclusive, student-centered approaches to teaching. For example, she centers each practical field experience course on themes relevant to her students' interests and needs as future educators. Additionally, she has developed engaging online versions of her courses to increase access for students who live and work in rural, distant settings of our Southern Oregon region and beyond. Her commitment to SOU students is often manifested by her frequent attendance at student sporting and performance events, where you'll hear a hearty, GO RAIDERS from Tanya on the sidelines. Her students frequently note that they feel heard, are challenged with relevant, engaging instruction, and perhaps most telling of all – that they want to teach like Tanya.

Distinguished Service Awardee

DR. RENE ORDONEZ

Dr. Rene Ordonez is recognized for his distinguished service to Southern Oregon University and the School of Business over more than three decades. During this time, he has made significant contributions to strengthening academic programs, advancing accreditation and assessment efforts, and supporting curriculum development and student success. In addition, his long-standing collaboration with the University of Guanajuato has expanded international learning opportunities and enriched the academic community. Beyond his university service, he has contributed to the broader community through board service and youth-focused initiatives. His sustained leadership, dedication, and commitment to continuous improvement have had a lasting impact on the institution, making him a deserving recipient of the Distinguished Service Award.

Distinguished Scholarship Awardee

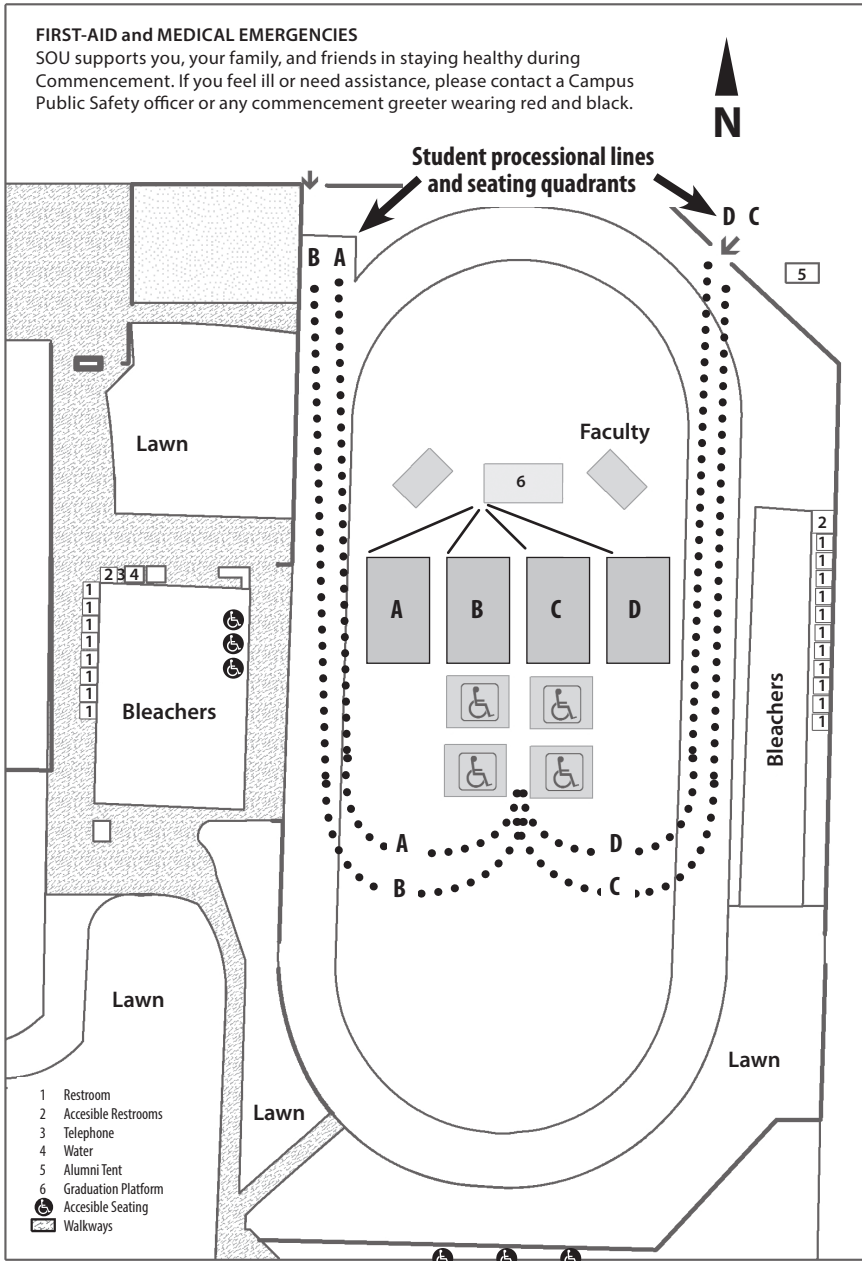
DR. SHANELL SANCHEZ

At SOU, Dr. Shanell Sanchez has produced a diverse and voluminous portfolio of original scholarship within the field of criminal justice. Her work broadly addresses racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system and gives voice to marginalized people and various community stakeholders. Furthermore, Dr. Sanchez admirably creates opportunities for SOU students to engage in meaningful scholarship, co-author published work, and present at conferences—helping them to prepare for meaningful careers and professional success. Dr. Sanchez’s work has appeared in diverse venues, including multiple open-access textbooks and educational resources, original qualitative research within peer-reviewed journals, and edited scholarly volumes. She is co-editor of the volume, *Exploitation and Criminalization at the Margins: The Hidden Toll on Unvalued Lives* (2024), and she has produced and co-authored multiple open-access educational resources to support educators and students in her field, including *Race, Crime, and Injustice* (2025) and *Introduction to the American Criminal Justice System* (2018). Through meaningful collaborations with students, colleagues, and the community, Dr. Sanchez’s work has supported the growth of reflexive and empathic capacities that the world needs, and has deeply inspired and enriched the SOU community.

COMMENCEMENT MAP

FIRST-AID and MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

SOU supports you, your family, and friends in staying healthy during Commencement. If you feel ill or need assistance, please contact a Campus Public Safety officer or any commencement greeter wearing red and black.



Additional accessible seating will be located inside The Hawk.

Honors and Recognition

HONORS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Cum Laude: 3.50^f (red cords)

Magna Cum Laude: 3.75^s (blue cords)

Summa Cum Laude: 3.90[‡] (gold cords)

HONORS COLLEGE ^h

Through a rigorous curriculum and distinctive experiential learning activities, the Honors College seeks to create a community of learners prepared for a lifetime of intellectual curiosity, inquiry, scholarship, and service. Students and professors work in partnership to create a challenging and practical liberal arts education centered on critical thinking, interdisciplinary undergraduate research, inclusive diversity, civic engagement, community service, and regional issues with global implications.

VETERANS ^β

Graduates who are veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

RECOGNITION SYMBOL
Cum Laude.....f

Magna Cum Laude.....s
Summa Cum Laude‡

Honors College.....h
Veteran.....β