HISTORY OF GW’S COMMENCEMENT

• The George Washington University’s first Commencement took place in 1824 when the institution was known as Columbian College and located on College Hill in upper northwest D.C. The Commencement was held at the F Street Presbyterian Church, now the site of Washington, D.C.’s Willard Hotel. Gilbert du Motier, the Marquis de Lafayette, was the invited speaker.

• The tradition for an outdoor, university-wide Commencement began in 1992 and was the first such celebration for all graduates in nearly two decades. Previously, individual schools held their own graduation celebrations at on-campus locations, as well as at other Washington, D.C., landmarks, such as DAR Constitution Hall and the National Theater.

• From 1992 through 2005, GW held its Commencement on the Ellipse, with views of the White House and the Washington Monument. In 2006, Commencement moved to the National Mall.

• To complement Commencement on the National Mall, GW’s 10 academic schools hold individual celebrations for students and their families during Commencement week.

GW COMMENCEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

About the Class of 2017:

• 290,000: The Class of 2018 joins a worldwide community of alumni living in more than 150 different countries.
• 49: U.S. states represented by the entire Class of 2018; the Class of 2018 also includes students from Washington, D.C., Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and American Samoa.
• 53: Countries represented by the undergraduate Class of 2018
• 102: Countries represented by the entire Class of 2018 international undergraduate and graduate students.
• Youngest Graduate is 17. In addition, 13 School Without Walls high school students are earning an associate degree from the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences.
• Youngest Bachelor Degree Recipient is 18 years old.
• Oldest Graduate is 80 years “young.”

Guests and Participants:

• 6,000: Number of graduates expected to attend the ceremony on the National Mall
• 20,000: Number of guests expected to attend the ceremony on the National Mall
• 235: Student staff
• 62: GW staff working on the Mall
• 135: Faculty participating
• 54: Members of the Platform Party
• 24: Alumni Emeriti participating
• 43: Musicians
• 1: George Washington Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps’ Ceremonial Color Guard
• 1: GW Police Department Honor Guard
• 62: Number of students who entered the Student Commencement Speaker Competition

The Ceremony Site:
• 1: GW is the ONLY university to hold its Commencement on the National Mall
• 13: Number of years on the National Mall (since 2006)
• 50: Width in feet of stage
• 25,000: Number of chairs
• 355: Distance in yards from stage to last audience chair

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