

GRADUATE
COMMENCEMENT

FRIDAY, MAY 8 • SPRING 2026

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University of North Carolina Pembroke

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Pembroke, North Carolina

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Commencement

May 8, 2026, at 7 p.m.
Chancellor Robin Gary Cummings, presiding
On the Quad between Livermore Library and Old Main

(The audience is asked to rise for the Processional.)

PRELUDE AND PROCESSIONAL..... Blackwater Brass Quintet
“THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER” Monica Hall

(The audience is asked to remain standing and join in the singing.)

O say can you see, by the dawn’s early light,
What so proudly we hailed through the twilight’s last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro’ the perilous fight,
O’er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming,
And the rockets’ red glare, the bombs bursting in air
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?
-Francis Scott Key

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS..... Chancellor Robin Gary Cummings

GREETINGS Dr. Reneè Lamphere
*Professor
Chair, Faculty Senate*

GREETINGS Gordon Byrd
Chair, Staff Senate

GREETINGS Kimberly Pelagio-Luis
President, Graduate Student Organization

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER..... Dr. Diane Prusank
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS John B. Herrington, PhD
*Commander, USN (Ret), Former NASA Astronaut,
and Chickasaw Nation Member*

AUTHORIZATION OF DEGREES..... Edward Brooks
Chair, Board of Trustees

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES FOR DEGREES Provost Prusank
William Howard Dean Graduate School.....Dr. Irene Pittman Aiken ’93, Dean

CONFERRING OF DEGREES Chancellor Cummings

AWARDING OF DIPLOMAS..... Chancellor Cummings

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS..... Kendall Oxendine ’03
President, Alumni Association

CONCLUDING REMARKS..... Chancellor Cummings

“HAIL TO UNCP” Monica Hall

(The audience is asked to rise and join in the singing of the alma mater.)

Where Carolina’s lofty pine trees
Pierce the southern blue,
Proudly stands our Alma Mater
Courageous, strong and true;
Black and gold float on forever,
Symbol of loyalty,
Pembroke our Alma Mater,
Hail to UNCP!
-Ira Pate Lowry ’29 and Reba M. Lowry

RECESSIONAL Blackwater Brass Quintet

(The audience is requested to remain standing until the Recessional ends.)

GRAND MARSHAL..... Dr. Jamie Litty
*Interim Associate Dean, Curriculum and Student Success
2026 UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching Recipient*

Marshals

Dr. Ashley Batts Allen
Dr. Shannon Cousineau
Dr. Melanie Escue
Dr. Sayo Fakayode

Dr. Kelly Ficklin
Dr. Cecilia Lara
Dr. Cliff Mensah
Dr. Lisa Mitchell

Dr. Sandra Plata-Potter
Dr. James Rogala
Dr. Nicole Stargell



Commencement Speaker John B. Herrington, PhD

**Commander, USN (Ret), Former
NASA Astronaut, and Chickasaw
Nation Member**

Cmdr. John B. Herrington is a retired naval aviator, test pilot, aquanaut and astronaut. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Applied Mathematics from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, a Master of Science in Aeronautical Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School and a PhD in education from the University of Idaho.

As an aviator, he has flown over 5,000 hours in more than 30 different types of aircraft. As an aquanaut, he commanded the sixth NASA Extreme Environment Mission Operations (NEEMO) mission, spending nearly 264 hours underwater. As an enrolled citizen of the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma, NASA considers Herrington to be the first citizen of a federally recognized tribe to fly in space. As an astronaut, Herrington flew aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour on the 16th assembly mission to the International Space Station. During his mission, he traveled over 5.6 million miles, spent over 330 hours in space and performed three spacewalks totaling nearly 21 hours.

Following his retirement from the Navy and NASA, Cmdr. Herrington worked in the commercial space sector before embarking on a 4,300-mile bicycle ride across the United States, from Cape Flattery, WA, to Cape Canaveral, FL, stopping at American Indian reservations and NASA Explorer Schools to share his story of motivation and mentorship with Native American youth. At age 52, he entered the University of Idaho. He earned a Doctorate of Education, investigating the factors that motivate and engage Native American students to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

He authored a children's book, *Mission to Space*, and is currently working on his personal memoir. He is married and the proud father of two daughters and grandfather to four grandchildren. He resides in the mountains of the Northwest Montana with his wife, Danielle, their sled dog Emme and their calico cat Ladybug.

Master of Arts

Mathematics Education

Sequoya Locklear Parker
Kadaisha Danielle Williams

Social Studies Education

Nathan P. Brisson
Mark James Czechowski
Ayesha White

Master of Arts in Education

Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Zachary Wendale Aea
Cherrell Alexis Francis
Alexandra Hatley
Roseanna Marie McMahan
Alexis Prunczik
Abigail Rhae Rojo
Markell Frank Ward
Mildred Denise Williams

Elementary Education

Mary Josephine Camacho
Kayla Marie Dutton
Kayla Michelle Lowery
Kimberlyn Lenora Lucas

Sport Administration

Kristen Kay Freeman
Michael Lloyd Pettitt
James Stevens

Professional School Counseling

Cassie Anne Morrison
LaSanya Diane Moseley
Sydney Peek
Lily Eleanor Pope
Jamekia Smith
Felicia Bostian Stamey
Ta'Shaeya Jamequia Blue
Meagan Latara Kay Bullard
Angelee Emanuel
Briana Nicole Harris
Justin Streeter
Erica Josephine Viola

Master of Arts in Teaching

Art Education

Crystal Sabrina Brooks
Camren Lee Champion
Stacie DeAnne Hall
Sara Elise Jorgensen
Gracen Elliott Kay
Shaina Rose Platt
Jelonnie Smith
Danielle Celeste Sneed

Birth to Kindergarten Education

Tameka DeShong Brewington
Davonne Celeste Cannon
Kenisha M. Crouch

Peaches Shantel Dixon
Asiana Dymonica Douglas
Tracy Michelle Floyd
Kelley Grasty
Shweta Hatwalne
Christian Necole Hickmond
Aisha C. Hoskins
Niniji K. Lloyd
Beverly C. McNeill
Cody Bryant Mercer
Morgan Nyasia Mickens
Shomika Phillips
Sheila Alexis Reneau
Shalena M. Revels

Master of Arts in Teaching *continued*

Heather Rogers
Marina Natalia Santos
Jessica Williams Smith
Kristen Nicole Strickland
Barbara N. Young

Tysheona Lawson
Michelle Love
Madison Renee Lowe
Gertrude Aileene Lowry
Skylar Marie Lucchesi
Catherine Beatrice Margaret May
Suzette McBryde
Brooke Moeller
De'Anndrette Natae' Murray
Danielle Christina Ongie
Madison Rose Owens
Rita Ann Oxendine
Barbara Elena-Gaetane Parrish
Kimberly Pelagio-Luis
Marcus Philyaw
Sylvia Powell
James C. Prescott III
Ashwini Shrinivasa Rao
Estrella Rodriguez
Llessenia Ivette Ruiz
Sheila Ann Sandidge
Joshua W. Saunders
Renee Sellers
Bharathi Senthil
Janae Nell Snipes
Karen Welcy Story
Latonya Thomas
M'Waka Jamila Thomas
Janet Thomas Tillman
Allicia Tinsley
Janetta Wall
Carly Ellen Walls
David Lee Wells
Jessica Victoria Whitter
Lindsay Shawnette Wood
Jessica Stewart Young

English Education

Brittany D. Covington

Elementary Education

Lyndsey Kathleen Anderson
Kimberly Ann Babson
Ashley Marie Baranoski
Taylor B. Bartley
Justine Berry
Jahmila Makena Roho Best
Tajhai Janea Black
Patricia Singletary Brackett
Elisa Christine Brunner
Jason Matthew Byars
Jordan Byars
Julianna Iseabell Campbell
Shaun Carter
Crystal Chandler
Amanda Santos Cowart
Ashley Cottrell Davis
Kristan Davis
Socoria Lee Dial
Melissa Jane Dowless
Angelia Duenas
Sierra M. Floyd
Tulani Charlotte Fox
Elizabeth Gruber
Keonna S. Hale
Danielle McLeod Harris
Kimberly Hayes
Ella Demetrice Hines
Bethany Faith Hunt
Tara Rachael Jacobsen
Jasmine Jones
Michele Turner Kelly
Harsha Krishnakumar Menon
Kaela Teyanna McDowell-Meeks
Courtney Charmaine Lancaster

Master of Arts in Teaching *continued*

Health and Physical Education

Zachary Farmer
Kyria Denise Locklear
Haley Brooke Rising
Ava Strawn
Justin Edward White

Mathematics Education

Lisa Jones Hunt
Maurice Dashon Mackie

Middle Grades Education:

Mathematics

Georgianna J. Revels
Sarah Word

Middle Grades Education: Science

Louellen Locklear
Vernice'a Paulette Spellman
Kansas Rain Stephens

Middle Grades Education:

Social Studies

Michael Gerrid Morman

Science Education

Daniela Chinos Dial
Ruth Elizabeth Hunnicutt
Kyra Wall

Social Studies Education

John Henry Bourgeois III
Brennen J. Herbert
Kody Lee Roy Peterson

Special Education

Michael D. Avner
Stephen Michael Badras
Patricia L. Bailey
Michel Arlyn Bain-Hernandez
Aniya Breona Bilal
Morgan Browne
Samantha C. Caulder
Alesha Clapp
Jennifer Elizabeth Davis Agosto
Kimberly Evans
Christy Hoffman Gomez
Libby Kisseih
John Robert Landini
Lacole Lock
Douglas Edward Manders
Nashua Oraby
Divine Grace Concepcion Padua
Addie Jade Plevik
Toccarra Yvonne Smith
Erica Michelle Streets
Da'Quisha Thompson
Analia Wehe-Lehmann
Bryan Malachi Woods

Master of Business Administration

Byron Addison
Peter Adija
Francis Kwadzo Ahiawodzi
Akinrotimi Idowu Akinola
Robert Anthony Austin
Donna Avery
Samuel Baker
Brittney Amber Baldwin
Brittany Leigh Barnett
Anna Diane Bass
Christina Bass

Natalia Pavlovna Battisti
Erica Bedoya
Jykya-Makala Precious Bell
Anthony Norman Bethea Jr.
John Randall Billington
Tyler Storm Blackburn
Logan Malachi Bossert
Shanique Taathimeka Boykin
Elijah Boyles
William Tyson Brown
Darius LaMont Bullock

Master of Business Administration *continued*

Kendrick Calix
 Thomas Brandon Carey III
 Amber Cate
 Stephanie Marie Coachman
 Faith May Collier
 Haley Noelle Cook
 Brandon Anthony Crump
 Leah Yvonne Cummings
 Angela Afy David
 Giana Lucia Davis
 Zion Teshawn Davis
 Patricia Degraffenreidt
 Kedar Jean Delva
 Kelly Patricia Dixon
 Joel Draper
 Dashawn Maurice Drayton
 Alasia J. Duncan
 Andreaka Cierra Ellis
 Lori Katelyn Ellis
 Jocelyn Howard Everington
 Shaylee Jade Falder
 Gina Marie Floyd
 Maria Josephine Floyd
 Haley Morgan Fox
 Zaliyah Nekol Foxworth
 Michala Givens
 Sandy Howard Goff
 Elizabeth Nicole Gomez
 Daniell Goodridge
 Candice Renee Gorham
 Kennedi Green
 Ryan Hainey
 Jerry Brent Hall
 Kayla Michelle Hardin
 Shaun Harris Rose
 Sarah Hatchel
 Brynn Thomas Hatcher
 Vonte Monique Hedgebeth
 Matthew Caleb Heffelfinger
 Angel Hendrix
 Ashley Highsmith
 Samantha Holden

Angilee Jackson
 Dylan J. Jackson
 Rakyah Chailee Jacobs
 Adam Michael Johns
 Camryn Jones
 Hunter Daryl Jones
 Samad Ahmad Khan
 Patience Precious Kimwesa
 Alexander Ruvelt Kirkwood
 Raymond Stephen Koloski
 Nicky Sounitar Konemany
 Brooke Lafko
 Sarah Marie Leggett
 Daniel Charles Leonard
 William Lese
 Adam Lindley
 Timothy Craig Locklear
 Kailey Ariel Lopez
 Marc Dwayne McAllister
 Montana Marie Millen
 Kalgi Modi
 Candace Montague
 Timothy S. Moore
 Ritesh Naik
 Samanta Noyola-Luviano
 Aiyana Ocampo
 Leah Kwamboka Onyari
 Alexis Yucenta Owens
 Daniel Parry
 Zinkal Patani
 Jonathan David Patrick
 Matthew M. Patterson
 Alexandria R. Penfield
 Andrew Brennen Perrin
 Kitiana Ponce
 Caitlyn Chason Potts
 Emma Grace Powers
 Ethan Lee Profit
 Cathy Renee Ravenell
 Destiny Redfern
 Cornell Craig Richards II
 Rushane Adrian Richards

Master of Business Administration *continued*

Jordan Celia Riffe
 Daelon Robinson
 Gregory T. Robinson
 Rebekah Romberg
 Nicolette Krystal Roop
 Denise Janelle Russ
 I-Jane Ardos Sahn
 Aiden Sanford-Vu
 Erica Lynn Schneller
 Daren Hanson Sellers
 Kathryn Shields
 Laccia Denette Shiver
 Travis Monquette Silver
 Geraldine Lurena Simmons
 Hannah Lyn Smith
 Mary Smith

TiAsia Adrianna Smith
 Anthony Walter Cowan Speights
 Ryan Whitley Spivey
 Chelsea Colette Staincliffe
 Crystle Natalie Stephens
 Randi N. Strickland
 Sulemana Tahidu
 Eddriane Thomas-McDuffie
 Ashley Thandiwe Tshuma
 Jocelyn Tolentino Alba
 Muhammad Abdul Hadi Waheed
 Logan Mills Ward
 Kishara Ashley Warren
 Parkes Hunter Whipple
 Joseph Daniel White

Master of Public Administration

Gina Anne Allgaier
 Elizabeth Baker Carriker
 Jon Russell Chavis
 Brittany Anne Dahlberg
 Lucas Allen Everette
 Roberta Maureen Kunz Fox
 Sarah Makenzie Haywood

Julia Page McCurry
 Jessica Arnold Miller
 Catherine Daly Peele
 Abdon Alessandro Silva
 Kevin Pernel Spears
 Matthew Thomas Sullivan
 Brooks Walker Tipton

Master of School Administration

Jasmine Nicole Adams
 Amanda Wyatt Allen
 Jason P. Allen
 Rana Naiem Al-Sabawi
 Shatila Banks
 Kathryn Marlowe Bannerman
 Jennifer McLean Barnett
 Debra Michelle Becker
 William Richard Bell
 Stephanie Marie Bixel
 Sandra Viviana Blefko
 Latoya R. Bradley
 Jessica Renee Bragdon
 Rodney Brewington
 Kayla Renee Britt

Christina Marie Brock
 Jessica Brown
 Brandi Renee Bullard
 Kasey Danielle Coley
 Bethany Algiere Conrad
 Lee Katherine Corbett
 Holly M. Craven
 Amy Amanda Cribb
 Lacynthia Williams Duckett
 Titus Duff
 Callie Kuykendall Franklin
 Makkeddah Gilchrist
 Thomas Scott Graham
 Rhonda Gwyn
 Dedra Haire

Master of School Administration *continued*

Jessica Stewart Hales	Kelly Ann McIlhargey
Jenni Guerry Hall	Shannon Monteiro
Kathleen Elizabeth Harris	Sarah Fawn Whitworth McLamb
E'Tricia Danyel Hatten	Anna Katherine McPhail
Raven Grim Hayes	Rhonda King Meszaros
Wesley Keith Horton	Brittney Moody
Johnathan Wade Hunt	Mathew Brent Purser
Calondra Jackson-McCarter	Aldric James Ragland
Karen Lynn Johnson	Nicholas Paul Raynor
Tareva Rochelle Johnson	Susan Jane Reddick-Wiggins
Bethany Raye Taylor Jones	Derrick Alan Rice
Gennifer Kaye Jones	Patricia Anne Roberson
Sandra BreAnn King	Laura Louise Robison
Deborah T. Klimeh Kwiagaye	Heba Mahmoud Salama
Candice Hedgepeth Lambert	Sarah Elizabeth Sherman
Cynthia Lou Leatherwood	Austin Lawrence Sluder
Stephanie Ellis Lemons	Leslie Marie Smith
Samantha Michelle Lewis	Zachary Smith
Christina Louise Malone	Zackery Kenneth Snyder
Laura Elizabeth Martyak	Sara Lucas Teal
Whitney LaBarbera Masterson	Jason Eliseo Tovar
Brandy Lee May	Michael Patrick Vasinko
Laquacia Q. McCorkle	Brittany Nicole Weaver
Stephanie Lynn McGirt	Beth Rasberry Wurch

Master of Science in Nursing

Bobbi Lea Godsey	Asia Patrice Tilley
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Master of Social Work

Emily Allen	Denise Kathleen Cox
Brent Botros	Amber Nicole Cranford
Amber Lynn Branch	Amber Sunshine Cooley Crawford
Danasia Danyell Brewer	Katelyn Brianna Culbreth
Courtney Shanel Brown	Nicollette Elizabeth Cushinotto
Ashtin Drabenstot Bullard	Samaya Denette Dawson-Hart
Keonna Burgess	Kenyonna India Deese
Karmin Caceres	Shannette DeVoise
Mishalle Camacho-Kolakowska	Jordan Dew
Kristen Beth Caplinger	Cheyenne Eckard
Melissa Carrillo	Antonisha R. Elliott
Christan Lee Chavis	Jessica G. Franks
Sivan Summer Cohen	Tedward Laverne Frazier Jr.

Master of Social Work *continued*

Chloe Elizabeth Gary	Michelle McNeill
Adriana Gonzalez Jimenez	Mariah Hope Merritt
Coley Astrid Greystone	Jeremiah Jerrod Moore
Anesha Hackett	Jessica Danielle Oxendine
Michele Rosner Haire	Kimberly Parker
Brianna Alexis Hall	Velma Jacobs Patrick
Cayla Thomas Hardesty	Jacika Karolina Poisel
Serena Harper-Smith	Stephanie Ponpon
Johandalis Yadira Hernandez	Tamea L. Quick
Laura Hester	Cori Lynn Reed
Devanae Deniece Humphrey	Latoya Lynn Robinson
Lyza Simone Humphrey	Samisha Tankeyia Rose
Kristie Revels Hunt	Amaya Royal-Meadows
Mahala Icenhour	Maria Guadalupe Santiago
Danielle Ragine Jackson	Amy R. Saucedo Gallegos
Aysia James	Demetria T. Sconiers
Emma Katherine Jernigan	April Scott
BreeAnna Joy Johnson	Khalelah Angela Shackelford
Joel Kimoni	Denisha Simmons
Clarissa Denise Kiser	Heaven Smith
Amy Leonard	Alexa Valentina Smith-Surrett
Kamren Jamal Lewis	Hannah Sykes
Ashlyn Ruth Lilly	Bethany Smith Taylor
Hallie Maynor Locklear	Courtney Chevonne Tillman
Kamryn Annette Locklear	Katarina Raine Tinder
Makayla Maria Locklear	Marlow Bryan Townsend
Melia Ann Locklear	Hannah Tyner
Tisha Locklear	Kristen Marie Valles
Kemoni Long	Alberto Vazquez
Sade Arayia Malloy-Whitaker	Ryan Vojdani
Kyle Manning	Crystal Marie White
Consepsion Martinez-Mondragon	Keziah Monique White
Jasmine Mbata	Abigail Renee Williams
Janiya Shuntia McCollum	Kenneccia Zhane' Woolard
Lotorius Quantae McDonald	Angela Wooten
Regan Brianna McDougal	McKayla Wright
Jeanita Rhodes McGuigen	

The commencement program must be printed before final grades for the semester are completely processed. Therefore, the names and recognitions listed in the program are subject to modification.

UNCP has taken great care to ensure that no errors exist in this program.
Any errors that may exist are unintentional, and we apologize for them.

Comments on Commencement

Welcome to Commencement exercises for University of North Carolina Pembroke.

- To ensure that our graduates have the best experience, please turn off or place on mute all cell phones and electronic devices.
- “Americana” Honor Cords are keepsake red, white and blue cords worn by students who have served or plan to serve in the military.
- Interpreters for today’s ceremony are provided by All American Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.
- Dr. Jonathan Drahos, professor and director of theatre, is announcing the names of the candidates for graduation.
- Lumbee Tribe flutist John Oxendine is leading the platform party, accompanied by Lumbee Ambassadors: Miss Lumbee Taylor Davis, Teen Miss Lumbee Keely Deal, Junior Miss Lumbee Kyndall Locklear, Little Miss Lumbee Jady Grace Herndon.
- To access the Commencement ceremony livestream with captions on a personal device, go online to uncp.edu/live.

A reception will immediately follow the ceremony in a tent near the water feature.

UNC Pembroke Land Acknowledgment

North Carolina is home to eight federally or state-recognized tribes: Coharie, Eastern Band of Cherokee, Haliwa-Saponi, Lumbee, Meherrin, Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, Sappony and Waccamaw Siouan.

The University of North Carolina Pembroke respectfully acknowledges that the lands within and surrounding present-day Robeson County are the traditional homelands and gathering places of many Indigenous peoples — notably the Lumbee.

We share an ongoing responsibility to safeguard these lands and to respect the sovereignty of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. UNC Pembroke honors all Indigenous elders — past, present and emerging — who have been and remain an integral part of the history and culture of this region.

Commencement Traditions

The academic regalia seen in tonight’s Commencement signify the scholarly pursuits and academic achievements of the people wearing them. Originally designed to keep monks and clerics warm in cold medieval monasteries, the heavy gowns, hoods and oddly shaped caps eventually became the attire of scholars.

Those who have earned doctorates wear gowns ornamented with narrow velvet panels down the front and large, silk-lined hoods worn down the back. The voluminous, bell-shaped sleeves have horizontal bars in colored velvet that indicate the doctor’s field of study. A doctor’s cap may be a square mortarboard, a tam or a beret.

A master’s gown is black and includes a hood trimmed in velvet, the color indicating the area of study. The large, oblong sleeves are cut with an arc in the front and squared in the back. A master wears a square mortarboard. The bachelor wears a simple gown with long, pointed sleeves and a square mortarboard.

The colors that signify fields of study include:

Arts, Letters and Humanities	White
Commerce, Accountancy and Business	Drab
Economics	Copper
Education	Light Blue
Fine Arts	Brown
Music.....	Pink
Nursing.....	Apricot
Philosophy	Dark Blue
Physical Education	Sage Green
Public Health.....	Salmon Pink
Science.....	Golden Yellow
Social Work.....	Citron

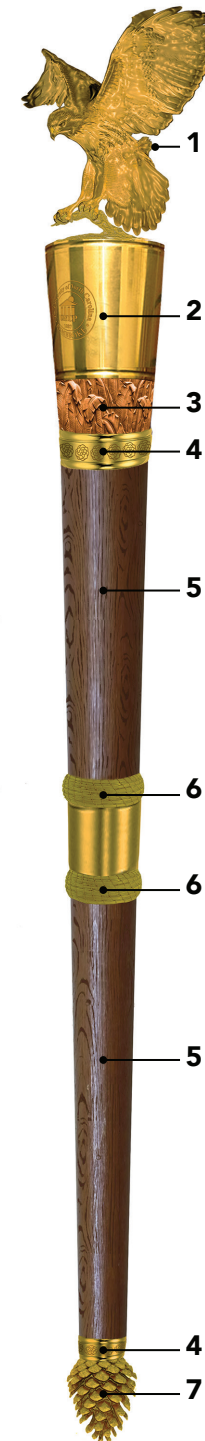
Brief History of Commencement at University of North Carolina Pembroke

During the early years of the institution, Commencement spanned four or more days and was a huge campus and community event. The celebration typically included a baccalaureate ceremony; declamation, recitation and oratorical contests led by student literary societies; award presentations; a baseball game; student drama productions; and separate graduation ceremonies for the high school and normal/college graduates.

Notable events in the history of Commencement at UNC Pembroke include:

- 1905: Rev. D.F. Lowry, the school's first graduate and namesake of the D.F. Lowry Building.
- 1909: The last Commencement exercises took place at the original campus at Pates.
- 1912: John A.B. Lowry, the first high school graduate and second graduate from the institution.
- 1914: Winnie Lee Bell Jenkins and Ruth Sampson Locklear received high school diplomas; they were the first females, and third and fourth graduates of the school.
- 1923: Commencement took place in Old Main for the first time.
- 1928: The first two-year normal (teaching) class graduated with 10 students.
- 1935: The first two-year junior college class graduated with four students.
- 1938: The first three-year normal and college class graduated with 12 students.
- 1940: The first four-year baccalaureate degrees were awarded to six students: Inez Hunt Bell, Eteska Locklear Hunt, Dorsey Lowry, Charles W. Maynor, Conrad Oxendine and Joseph Sampson. Maynor is recognized as the first four-year graduate because he finished his degree requirements one semester early.
- 1944: First Bachelor of Science degrees awarded.
- 1954: Faculty members Ira Pate Lowry '29 and his wife, Reba M. Lowry, wrote the melody and lyrics to "Hail to PSC," the university's alma mater; the song was renamed "Hail to UNCP" to reflect the university's name change in 1996. Lowry Bell Tower is named in their honor. The first white graduate, Rev. Christian White.
- 1966-71: Summer Commencements held.
- 1969: The first African American graduate, Sylvia Baugham Banks.
- 1979: The first master's degree, a Master of Arts in Education, was awarded to 57 students.
- 1981: The university awarded its first honorary doctorate to Dr. English E. Jones, a former chancellor.
- 1987: Graduates wore gold tassels to commemorate the school's Centennial Celebration.
- 1999: The first winter Commencement took place; the UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching recipient has since served as the winter Commencement speaker.
- 2011: In May, a separate Commencement exercise was established for the School of Graduate Studies; Commencement returned to the Quad next to historic Old Main.
- 2012: In May, the tassel color was permanently changed to gold as part of the 125th anniversary celebration. Graduates also wore special zipper pulls during the spring and winter ceremonies to commemorate their graduation in the school's 125th year.
- 2013: In May, graduates wore commemorative 125th anniversary zipper pulls. Commencement marked the conclusion of the university's 125th anniversary celebration.
- 2017: The new university mace — featuring the red-tailed hawk — was used for the first time in academic ceremony.
- 2025: The first doctoral degree, a Doctor of Nursing Practice, was awarded to eight students.
- 2025: The Graduate School was named the William Howard Dean Graduate School.

The ceremonial mace, a symbol of university scholarship and integrity since the 11th century, is used to lead the academic procession at commencement and other special ceremonial occasions, signifying the importance of the event and the conformation of the academic process.



Drawing by Carla Rokes, chair of the Mace Committee

The University of North Carolina Pembroke has a rich history unlike any other institution of higher education. As it celebrated 130 years of service, the university commissioned a new ceremonial mace befitting the distinctiveness and importance of UNC Pembroke. Showcasing the work of local artists, the mace celebrates the university's heritage, mission and sense of place, including its indelible ties to the Lumbee people and southeastern North Carolina.

From the pinecone footer to the 24-karat-gold red-tailed hawk perched atop the staff constructed of local wood, every inch of the mace tells the UNC Pembroke story. Seven pinecone patchwork designs represent the institution's seven founding fathers, visionaries who championed the power and importance of education. Creation of the mace was made possible thanks to generous support from descendants of the founding fathers.

The three parts of the mace — foot, staff and head — represent the three phases of the institution's evolution from a normal school (1887-1941) into a college (1941-1969) and then a regional, comprehensive university (since 1969). While not in use during academic ceremonies, the mace is publicly displayed to honor our trailblazing institution.

1 RED-TAILED HAWK

The red-tailed hawk, plated in 24-karat gold, is UNC Pembroke's mascot and is indigenous to the region. The hawk's dual position — taking flight or landing — symbolizes the university's efforts to position students to be successful graduates, taking flight to soar into the future. The landing hawk symbolizes alumni who return home to reconnect with their alma mater.

2 UNCP SEAL

The UNCP Seal offers a representation of the columns in front of Old Main with a rising sun coming from the top right. Old Main is the institution's oldest and most iconic structure.

3 TOBACCO LEAVES

Tobacco is an herb sacred to American Indians that is used during ceremonies. It was also grown widely in the region by farmers from the 18th to 20th centuries. The color of cured tobacco reflects the university's color of gold.

4 PINECONE PATCHWORK

The Pinecone Patchwork derives its name from the longleaf pinecone. The seven patterned pinecones that surround the mace represent UNC Pembroke's seven founders: Isaac Brayboy, James E. Dial Sr., Preston Locklear, W.L. Moore, James Oxendine, John J. Oxendine and Olin Oxendine. Their names are cast on the head of the mace.

5 STAFF

Wood used to make the UNCP mace's staff was sourced from the Lumber River Basin. According to poet John Charles McNeill (1874-1907), the Indian name of Lumbee was originally used for the river, from an Indian word that means "black water."

6 PINE NEEDLE BASKET WEAVE

Needles from the pine tree are used by the Lumbee to construct baskets used for carrying and storing items.

7 PINECONE

One of the Lumbee Tribe's significant symbols is the pinecone. The pine tree, found throughout the region, was once the most populous tree on campus.

Alumni Association

Executive Board of Directors

Kendall Oxendine '03, President
Dr. Robin Simmons '72, 1st Vice President
Alicia Chavis '17, 2nd Vice President
Dr. Kelsey Cummings '10, '14, '17, Secretary/Treasurer

Board Members

Kara Atkins '16	Anthony Locklear '89
Lauren Baskett '05	Chris Lowery '13
Dr. Shelli Brewington '99	Daryl Miller '00
Rodney Jackson '87, '06, '09	Joe Osman '93
Jason King '08	Kristi Strickland '12
Dr. Amber Locklear	Christy Strickland Theodorou '05

Alumni Association Involvement

The UNC Pembroke Alumni Association invites and encourages all alumni to get involved in the life of the university. Support campus events with your presence. Support educational programs with your monetary gift. Support marketing and recruitment efforts by talking with friends, neighbors, co-workers and family about the great educational opportunities at UNCP. Support students by becoming a mentor.

Young or old, alumni can give back to their alma mater and ensure the quality of excellence students have come to expect. If you are a recent graduate and not yet financially secure, you can channel your energy and become involved in a network effort. If you are at the height of your career, you can become a mentor and/or make a financial contribution. If you are retired, you can donate your time through a number of opportunities.

For more information on how to get involved, contact the Office of Alumni Affairs by calling 910.521.6333 or emailing alumni@uncp.edu.

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