

Hampton University

Hampton, VA 23668

Committee on
Ceremonial Occasions
(757) 727-5402

May 12, 2021

Dear Hampton University Family:

On Sunday, May 9, 2021, Hampton University celebrated its 150th and 151st Commencement. By all accounts, the main ceremony went extremely well. However, the University experienced challenges related to ensuring that individual school ceremonies reflected accurate names, majors, degrees, and pictures.

There were several contributing factors to the errors that appeared in the school ceremonies. First, the external contractor that was hired to create and present that aspect of the ceremony failed us in many ways. Much of the data that was presented was not reflected in the final product that we received. Secondly, there are a number of processes in place that allow us to manage issues in the moment when we host live ceremonies. Because the ceremony was presented in a virtual format, data had to be submitted nearly two weeks before the actual Commencement date. Therefore, we did not have the opportunity to conduct in advance all student academic, financial and other clearances and verifications that would normally happen during that time-period. In spite of all our efforts in mitigating this, there were some errors in the graduate roll call.

In addition, some of the tasks necessary for inclusion in the ceremony by candidates were not completed within the established time lines. Many students did not submit their pictures, while others submitted pictures of questionable quality. Some students did not complete their graduation applications nor clear their financial obligations in time to appear in the ceremony.

Within the next several days, the University will be replacing the ceremonies on You Tube to reflect many of the errors that appeared as it pertains to those students whose information should have been included and was not. Although we cannot turn back the hands of time, the updated ceremonies celebrating our graduates will live in the virtual space on You Tube indefinitely. It is our hope that you, your family and friends will enjoy these and access them often.

Sincerely,

/s/ Dr. Karen Turner Ward
Chair, Ceremonial Occasions
Old Dominion Endowed Chair
of Fine and Performing Arts