

Recommended Format and Elements for an Effective Commencement Speech

Below you will find information and recommendations for writing and delivering an effective commencement speech. You are not required to follow these suggestions, but it is recommended.

Overview: A commencement speech is a type of commemorative speech used for celebrations.

The aim is to pay tribute to a person, a group of people, or an institution. The fundamental purpose is not to inform listeners, but to *inspire* them; “to arouse and heighten their appreciation of or admiration for the person, institution, or idea...” (Lucas, 2023).

Formatting and Key Elements:

- Begin by describing, recognizing, and celebrating the significance of the occasion.
- Praise and congratulate the graduating class.
- Share a personal narrative that connects you with the topic, event and audience.
- Acknowledge those in the audience for their support, participation, involvement, struggles and/or success.
- Close with an encouraging message for the graduating class.

Commencement Student Speaker Audition Rubric 2024

Please use this selection criteria to assist with the selection process. Points will be tallied followed by a selection committee discussion to select the candidate that represents Mesa College

	Below Proficient (1)	Proficient (3)	Beyond Proficient (5)
<u>Content:</u> Message structure and clarity	The sequence of ideas/points is unclear. Content of the speech is inaccurate, incomplete, and/or not relevant to the topic or audience.	Message is clear and well-sequenced. There is a clear relationship among key ideas/points. The content is accurate and complete. Speech is relevant to the topic and audience.	The message is concise and well-structured. The organization of ideas is creative and powerful. The content is precise and comprehensive. Speech is customized to the audience and appropriate for the topic.
<u>Content:</u> Upbeat/inspirational language	Language is simplistic, trite, and/or not appropriate to audience or topic. Speech lacks inspirational content.	Vocabulary is appropriate to the audience and occasion. Speech contains inspirational content.	Vocabulary is rich and vivid. Language is appropriate to the audience and occasion. Speech contains inspirational content that is authentic and relatable.
<u>Delivery:</u> Energy, passion, timing, and strength (Spirit of Mesa)	It is difficult to hear the speaker, and the pace is either too slow or too fast. Speaker has little connection with audience. Delivery contains excessive fillers (“ums” or “uhs”). The speech is more than one minute above/below the 3.5-minute time limit.	Speaker is easy to hear. Speech is delivered at a pace that keeps audience’s attention. Moderately delivers the Spirit of Mesa. Delivery contains moderate fillers (“ums” or “uhs”). The speech is no more than 30 seconds above/below the 3.5-minute time limit.	Speaker varies their volume to fit the message, with a pace that is appropriate to the rhythms of the speech. Embodies the Spirit of Mesa in a way that keeps the audience actively engaged. Delivery contains minimal fillers (“ums” or “uhs”). The speech is within 10 seconds of the 3.5-minute time limit.
<u>Delivery:</u> Stage presence, body language, and eye contact	Body movement is too much or too little. Speaker displays little eye contact and minimal facial expression.	Body movement is appropriate to the context. Speaker makes regular eye contact with audience and varies facial expressions.	Speaker customizes body movement and gestures to context and speech content. Speaker engages the audience through varied and compelling eye contact and facial expressions.