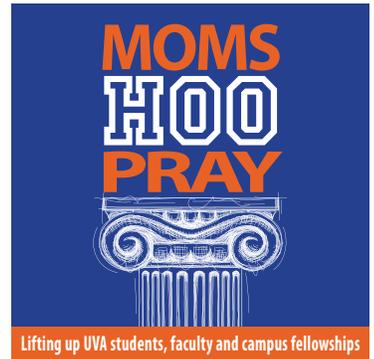


2019 UVA GRADUATION TIPS COMPLIMENTS OF



*****PRE-Tip for 2020 graduation from Beth S., who will attend the 2019 Graduation:**
“Class of 2020 parents really need to start calling hotels NOW ... many start taking reservations 5/1. And some say the Monday after graduation (which will be 5/20 this year) I found that going on the lodging websites isn’t all that helpful ... call and get a PERSON at any hotels you are possibly interested in staying at. Just beware that MANY of them pretty much triple their rates and require a 3-night minimum.”

2019 Graduation Final Exercises Info:
<https://majorevents.virginia.edu/finals/schedule>

ICYMI: You can receive text message alerts notifying you of important Finals Weekend announcements & schedule changes by texting “uvagrad” to 79516.
This is a free service, and users will be automatically unsubscribed after Finals Weekend.

New Tip from Mary K., who attended the 2018 Graduation
(interspersed with “acquired” advice and helpful links in orange text:)

I LOVED being there for the larger group graduation where the students finally get to “walk the lawn!” Many students carry a unique helium balloon so the parents can spot them in the sea of caps and gowns. (ask your student if they want to carry a balloon and what kind, then order one online to be delivered to YOU. Call ahead to see which C’Ville local grocery stores will fill these balloons for a fee...get that task done for them the day before their graduation because they won’t have time to get it themselves.)

My son did not carry a balloon but he texted me when he was coming down the center aisle and which side of the aisle he would walk down. (They need to coordinate with you via text what part of the center ramp they will walk down so you might spot them. I told my son where we were seated; he texted me before he arrived so I got great pics!) They all walk behind their individual school’s banner, (school order is listed in the program) but many students walk with their friends -- not in alphabetical order. More fun than a HS graduation. You can actually call out their names so they might spot you.

There's a lot of cheering and festivity. Dress in layers. Wear comfy shoes! We arrived at the lawn before sunrise for the main ceremony (not showered or dressed yet; we tagged teamed for that) We sat in random chairs to wait for the gates to open. Later on, ushers told us to go back through the metal detector with our tickets, so we tag teamed (we saved some seats while others went through officially) so we could sit EXACTLY where we wanted to: front rows on the first level up from where the students sat, and on the side of the ramp where we knew our son would come down, and on the front row so when they turned, we had GREAT PHOTO OPS. Afterward, we moved to another location for our son's diploma ceremony which was smaller and more personal.

(continued "acquired" advice and helpful links below:)

Since the Rotunda was repaired, walking the lawn takes place on 2 different days, either Saturday or Sunday, depending on which School they graduate from.

Your family should decide which ceremonies/events are most important to you.

"Valedictory Exercises" are on Friday and kick off the weekend; they are more relaxed and often have a fun speaker! If you already had to pay for a 3 night minimum lodging fee, you can enjoy Friday's 3pm ceremony. The 2019 Valedictory speaker is [Pharrell Williams](#).

Many plan a special lunch or dinner sometime during the weekend. Some folks celebrate in larger groups with their student, their student's friends and other families. Organize or make reservations well in advance to accommodate larger groups. Do what suits your budget and your style!

One good option is [Graduation Day Lunch](#) sponsored by The Center for Christian Study.

The students have a lot of social events that weekend, so coordinate with them ahead of time to make sure *you have the time with them that you want and they have the time with their friends that they want.* (You will need to negotiate this; don't be surprised if they choose their friends/plans over your family plans but do let them know in advance what you'd like them to do with you!)

Tip from Kelly H., who attended the 2016 Graduation

This tip is for Class of 2020 moms and beyond: **Our extended family stayed in the dorms. UVA sends an email in the spring to make the rooms available.** Much more reasonable on price and there is no minimum on number of nights reserved. Right next to O'Hill for easy breakfast before heading over to graduation. There are golf carts running from O'Hill to the lawn for grandparents and folks with disabilities.

We are staying in the dorms again this year for Nathan's graduation (2017).

Our only issue last year was that they had the beds on the highest setting. We were not able to lower them, (stuck on and no tools) so it was a climb each night. Fortunately my parents are younger grandparents. THIS year we are taking a mallet and I requested the beds be lowered. We will have to wait and see if they lower them, but will be prepared to do it ourselves if necessary.

Tip from Karen S., who attended the 2015 Graduation

Paid daily (or shorter) parking may be had each day of that weekend at garage near Boylan Heights restaurant at Wertland and 14th Streets on the Corner. They sell **graduation weekend parking passes** which allow you to come and go as you please over that weekend. Saved us the stress of figuring out parking details and allow us to easily meet up with our graduate who lived near The Corner.

Tip from Margaret C., who attended the 2014 Graduation

You can claim a seat on graduation morning VERY early. I tried hard to find on the website what time they would “let people in”. I read 8am, though it was HARD to find this information. So I showed up ca. 6:40am with my Starbucks in hand, thinking I would be standing in line to go in to get a seat, and, WOW! There was no one “at the gate”, so to speak, and I could go in and take/save whatever seats I wanted. And I was definitely not the first person there. A man who had already claimed the seats I would have taken had been there since 6am! And I saw an old friend of mine close by who had arrived at 6:30. So.....**To get/save the seats you want, do not be afraid to go early.** Eventually the ushers will show up and will check your ticket. You will be able to leave to use the restroom, though you will have to leave something on your seat to keep it saved. I was not sorry I had done this as we had great seats and saw not only our daughter, but just about every graduate I knew coming down the center walk way. It was such fun to be able to shout out congratulations to them as well, and take pictures to send to their families.

Tip from Trudi H., who attended the 2015 Graduation

Graduation/The Lawn: ASK so you know where the students will process. Last year they processed down the middle so obviously you don't want to sit way to the side. **There are a few balloon places to pick up a gigantic balloon for them to carry as they walk so you can see them in the crowd.** If you go behind the pavilions while they are lining

up you might be able to get a calm picture if someone is out saving your seat. I think best time to get pictures is after the baccalaureate on Friday. Much more relaxed atmosphere. Otherwise arrange in advance for someone to get a picture of your family as it gets chaotic and then they want to talk to their friends. **The Stud Lunch** might be a good place to grab someone to take a pictures if you aren't wilted by then. We didn't get to **The Stud Lunch** until very late on Sunday and it was great.

Garden Party: If you want to reserve a garden (no cost/lottery pick) check to see if they have accommodations in case it rains. We had a number of the Intervarsity students put their names in the drawing so we were sure to get a garden but it POURED and we were soaked and ended up with all the food under the colonnades of rooms facing the library and newcomb. I scoped out the garden on Friday and found there were tables from another event folded up that weren't being picked up until Monday so knew we could use them which was great. Then Saturday during the graduation (ours was on Sunday) I convinced the guards to let me through so I could pull all the way up to the garden, unload and then pull out parking elsewhere. Try asking the residents of the pavilion if you could pretty please park there if you have food and other things you are carrying in.

Tips from Nancy R., who attended the 2014 Graduation

Blessing Opportunity: Graduation is a significant milestone in your child's life, providing you with an opportunity to give a blessing. **It doesn't matter whether or not there are academic accolades. Successfully navigating four years at UVA with its academic and social stresses is an accomplishment worthy of recognition.** I told our son how proud of him we were for pursuing Christ all four years, for passionately engaging with his studies and his friends, and for living honorably. While we celebrated his graduation publicly with extended family, his dad and I blessed him privately at the end of the day with these words, lingering and loving eye contact, and a big hug. It was a special moment.

Lodging: Most hotels in the area charge higher rates and require a three-night stay. **Start early (up to a year or more) to nab a reservation.** If you want to stay in a particular hotel, ask the staff how early you can and should book. **But there are other options: The University offers rooms in a few of the dorms. And you can always look at "renting" a house or apartment for the weekend.** We actually paid some young friends to let us use their small house. They cleaned up and put out fresh flowers before leaving the key for us (they stayed with friends, though we offered a D.C. getaway at our house

as part of the exchange). We arrived on Friday, set up tables and chairs on the little screened-in back porch, and served a candlelit dinner to our family and our son's fiancée's family. We had bought chicken and made sides and cookies. It was a deliciously peaceful start to a busy weekend. And for a two-night stay, the house was also an amazing deal: \$500 for 2 bedrooms, 2 baths, and a living area for four adults. The use of the kitchen helped our expenses too. **You can look online for house and apartment rentals as well.** Prices vary widely.

Balloons: Many of the graduates carry distinctive helium balloons as they walk the Lawn so their families can locate them. We inflated ours at Kroger's. I hear that helium is scarce these days (?), so you might want to call ahead and check to make sure it will not be a problem. **You can even buy a balloon on Amazon or somewhere local before having it filled at the grocery store the night before graduation. You'll need to leave it at your grad's apt/house that night as well. Yes, you will be tired!**

Restaurant Reservations: I reserved a table at the Local for Saturday night very early in the year, maybe February? **Call the restaurant where you'd like to have a special family meal and find out what their policy is.** Many of them have set dinner times and prices for graduation weekend.

Celebrations: Saturday afternoon our son and his housemates, together with the help of the parents, had a small celebration with Costco sandwiches, chips, fruit, and cookies. It was great to see everyone together and to take pictures. Later that night, we went to a dessert party hosted by another house. **Some UVA ministries add their own celebrations to the official University's.** With the changes being made to graduation ceremonies this year, peripheral festivities will be affected, I'm sure, but in 2014 our schedule also included **brunch at Bonhoeffer House Saturday morning and a most welcome box lunch at the STUD between ceremonies on Sunday.** Reservations with payment per lunch are needed for the latter.

Moving out: Include this exhausting item to your list of things to do graduation weekend if you plan to help. We traded cars with our son and left for home. **He and his friends cleaned up and moved out on their own... and I think the extra time he spent winding down and packing without any time pressure from us was actually a good thing for all of us!**

Tips from Laura W., who attended the 2014 Graduation

Our inlaws used the tickets and we sat on the ground right in front of where they walked down the steps. I was able to take wonderful pics there as the nursing school was lined up right by the balcony area. **Make reservation for meals early! We ate out Friday night and just got sandwiches after graduation events and ate back at the hotel.** I'm glad we did because our grad wanted to go out later with friends and everyone was so tired!

Tips from Debbie A., who attended the 2014 Graduation

Consider making reservations at the Red Roof Inn on the Corner one year in advance and also signing up to be a Redicard member which gives you points for a free night's stay. Although the accommodations are nothing special, the hotel (like most others) requires a three night commitment, and the prices are greatly inflated, **it provides a free place to park your car on the Corner and you can walk to everything during the weekend including all the graduation events and the events at the Study Center.** It also included a continental breakfast each morning, and we ended up earning a free night's stay at a Red Roof Inn anywhere in the country on our Redicard from just that weekend. My husband hates traffic so if we needed to drive every day from a hotel to the Stadium to park, it would have made the weekend much more stressful.

Tips from Kathy B., who attended the 2014 Graduation

Housing Ideas: For you fourth year moms, you already have your hotel reserved. **If you are a third year mom reading this, reserve now, the rooms sell out quickly. Hotels require you to pay for three nights. So alternate ideas are worth thinking about, like a house swap, or getting a dorm room. (UVA website details how to do this.)** Some folks opt to **only go down for graduation if they don't have lots of activities they want to attend because the cost can be ridiculous.** We were very blessed to know a NOVA family with a fully equipped home in Batesville. Though it was a bit of a drive, it allowed us to prepare two special meals there — Saturday night with our son and his roommate's family — and a late lunch/early dinner after graduation with extended family. This kept us from the restaurant madness though it required a bit of organization ahead of time to shop and haul our delicacies.

Alternative Idea: Because of the lack of tickets for seats at Final Exercises, and the difficulty of getting around, **many grands and siblings might want to consider driving the day of graduation and only attend the Diploma Ceremony. Our son and D-I-L drove the two grands and had no problem leaving from Reston early morning and arriving in plenty of time to be dropped off at a shuttle bus to meet us at the Diploma Ceremony. Many of the smaller majors have their ceremony in a Pavillion and serve light refreshments beforehand.**

What to Bring: **Take a good look at weather.com the week before and pack with all possibilities in mind!** We drivers have the luxury of stuffing the car trunk, so pack a lot of options! Definitely **bring a small bag you can carry with you to Valedictory/ Graduation/Diploma ceremonies packed with some snack foods, water bottles, extra jacket, raincoat, umbrellas, sunscreen, sunglasses, camera and reading material** because you will spend a LOT of time waiting. **Pack an extra camera battery and battery charger. Don't forget your cell phone chargers!**

Clothes: **I made the mistake of wearing high heels on Graduation Day. Though I looked nice, and happy with the pictures taken afterwards, if I had a do-over, I would find an outfit that could be worn with low heels or more walkable, comfy shoes.** There are a lot of cobblestones and uneven pavement on the Lawn.

Make sure you have a sweater or jacket with you even if it may be warm, as that sunny spot you find early may be in the cool shade an hour or two later!

Final Exercises: **We bought a humongous balloon at Harris Teeters on Saturday night and gave it to our son after dinner so he would have it with him and not have to find us to get it on graduation day. We texted him when we found our seats so he would know which side of the wide aisle to walk down.** We were able to spot him because he walked right along the rope barrier erected to contain the graduates and he had the huge balloon. (They can walk with their friends — our son was a Math/Econ major and walked with his roomie, an Engineering Major.) There were three or four others with the same balloon but if you look at the program, you will see the order that each school processes which helps. **The closer you are to the ropes that define the walkway, the better for pics but a good zoom lens and no shame to stand on a chair also works :)** **Our son spotted me — not because I was yelling his name at the top of my lungs — but because I was up high :)**

Diploma Ceremony: After catching a pic of our grad as he walked The Lawn, I sat for a

while, then **slipped out of the graduation ceremony to snag good seats for our extended family for his Diploma Ceremony, which followed immediately after graduation.** At our pre-set time and location, I met the grands and my other kids, greeted them, guided them to our saved Diploma Ceremony seats and gave them waters and sandwiches. (I did not miss sitting through the graduation speeches. My husband gave me the highlights.) **Though our son could have gone to two Diploma Ceremonies as a double major, he chose the one with the least number of graduates.** Still, it was very long... We bolted as soon as possible after family pictures against the beautiful backdrop of leafy trees and the Pavillion Wall and headed back to our Batesville home-away-from-home for a celebratory early dinner. Traffic going back to NOVA was very congested, and we were exhausted, but very grateful for the beautiful, momentous weekend!

Tips from Beky H., who attended the 2013 Graduation

My biggest tip is to **find a way to identify your grad for "Walking the Lawn"**. Some kids carried balloons. It actually was very festive, more like a parade. There is a big "standing room" area where they first come in down the Rotunda steps, and if you don't snag an aisle seat, then you can easily catch a photo of them there. They line up with their friends, so it is a great way to catch them together. **I had a colorful umbrella that I held up unopened once we identified our grad so she could come find us.** There is definitely time to do that as they walk. (it takes an hour for all the students to walk the lawn) **Some families had balloons too, but that really made it harder for everyone trying to spot their student.** Our son is 6'5" and had a camera with a telephoto lens so he used that to spot her. **(Binoculars would be very useful too)** **We were texting too, to identify locations.** Our grad's diploma ceremony was right after the graduation so by the time it was over we were pretty hungry. The lunch at the Stud is perfect, because you can drop in whenever. **If your student double majored, they might want to do two diploma ceremonies,** so that could make it more complicated. Because of the rain, the Valedictory Exercises were held at JPJ Arena, which from my perspective was preferable. The hitch was the tickets. As it turned out, there were two Master's candidates walking behind us who offered us their extra tickets. I think there might have been a few scalpers as well. I thought I heard one say something about paying for \$25.00 for the extra ticket. **As for the lawn, there is plenty of room to bring folding chairs and sit there.** There is a lot of movement during everything. It is far from quiet, and there are only a couple of big screens, so you really are hearing the ceremony, not seeing it, except for the procession. There is a recessional, but it is pretty chaotic. **The three tickets for the lawn, go for the**

provided seats, but certainly do not guarantee seeing anything.

We did our big celebratory dinner on Saturday, early evening. I think the kids really like to hang out together that evening, so unless you have a big crowd coming, maybe giving them a little space that evening is good. We went to a restaurant called The Shebeen. It is a South African restaurant, a bit off the beaten path, kind of near the downtown mall, but not on it. The food was fabulous and I think it was considerably less crowded than a lot of places were. **We did make reservations, and you have to put down a deposit which is subtracted from the meal, but I suspect that is standard most places that weekend.** Because the weather on Saturday (the day with the most free time) was so terrible, we didn't do much, but a little packing up. Sunday is pretty busy, not much time for extras beside eating.