

# PIEDMONT UNIVERSITY

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## UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE COMMENCEMENT

Friday, July 17, 2026 | 10:00 a.m.  
Johnny Mize Athletic Center



# PROGRAM

**Presiding**

Marshall M. Criser III  
*President of the University*

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**PROCESSIONAL** ..... “The Liberty Bell March” ..... *United States Army Field Band*  
*The audience will rise as the academic procession begins and remain standing until after the first hymn.*

**INVOCATION** ..... The Reverend Joyce Acree

**HYMN** ..... “The Star Spangled Banner” ..... Katelynn Watts  
*Piedmont University Student*

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

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER** .....President Criser

**ADDRESS** ..... Dock Sisk  
*Vice Chairman of Piedmont Board of Trustees*

**CONFERRING OF DEGREES.** .....Dr. Jeff Bruns  
*Vice President for Academic Affairs*

The conferring of degrees is authorized by the Board of Trustees upon the recommendation of the President and Faculty. Dr. Jeff Bruns, Vice President for Academic Affairs, will introduce the dean of each college. Dr. Bob Glass, Dean of Libraries and College Librarian, will read the names of the candidates. Chairman Arrendale and President Criser will award diplomas to recipients of the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Business Administration, Master of Science, Master of Education, Master of Arts, Master of Arts in Teaching, Education Specialist, and Doctor of Education.



**HYMN TO THE ALMA MATER..... Katelynn Watts**

*Please rise as a Piedmont University student performs the Hymn to the Alma Mater. Remain standing until the conclusion of the recessional.*

<p><b>Verse 1</b> Where the Georgian hills grow purple In the sunset glow, Proudly stands our Alma Mater In the vale below.</p>	<p><b>Verse 2</b> As around the mighty oak tree Clings the ivy vine, So around thee, dear old Piedmont Loyal hearts entwine. (Refrain)</p>
<p><b>Refrain</b> Green and Gold float on for aye, Old Piedmont for thee, We, thy loyal sons and daughters Bless thy memory.</p>	<p><b>Verse 3</b> Here's to thee, then dear old Piedmont May you ever stand As an emblem of the noblest In our fair Southland. (Refrain)</p>

**BENEDICTION..... The Reverend Joyce Acree**

**RECESSIONAL ..... "Radetzky March" ..... Johann Strauss Sr.**

- Faculty Marshal**      Carlos Camp, *Professor of Biology*
- Registrar**             Melissa Fortner
- Student Marshals**    Sheena Patrick, *Associate Registrar*  
Lily Simpson, *Registrar's Specialist*  
Yareli Vazquez, *Registrar's Specialist*  
Ellawyn Ketch, *Registrar's Specialist*
- Gonfalon Bearer**      Emma Lightsey

**COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER**

Dock Sisk is a retired educator from Banks County, where he served the Banks County school system for over thirty years. After teaching for several years at the high school level, he served as a principal for five years. In 1984, Dock stepped into the role of Banks County School Superintendent where he served for an additional fifteen years. Dock also officiated and assigned officials for 40 years. Upon retirement from the school system, Dock followed his passion for basketball and began organizing basketball officials for local leagues.

Mr. Sisk is a 1972 graduate of Piedmont University, formally known as Piedmont College, where he received a degree in Mathematics and Biology. While at Piedmont, he was the manager of baseball and men's basketball and was inducted into the university's Hall of Fame in 1972. His athletic background reflects a strong commitment to sports and leadership, and he was honored in 2015 as the Naismith Women's Official of the Year by the Atlanta Tipoff Club for his work as a women's basketball official in the Southeastern Conference. Since 1991, Mr. Sisk has been an active member of the Piedmont Board of Trustees and has served as the Vice Chairman since 2002.

Dock resides on his farm in Banks County with his wife, Nan.

# DEGREE CANDIDATES

## COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Steve Jacobs, Dean

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### BACHELOR OF ARTS

Ivannaleea Ashley Marie Jones  
*History & Government and Psychology*

### BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

Lovette Tarsio Choloh  
*Forensic Science*

Rovia Saabir Karriem  
*Engineering Science*

Jared Thomas Parks  
*Mathematics*

Katherine Elizabeth Prowell  
*Mathematics and Neuroscience*

Karen Valencia  
*Forensic Science*

### MASTER OF SCIENCE

Alexia Allen  
*Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

Nicholas Atz  
*Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

Victoria Carithers  
*Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

Rebecca D. Cory  
*Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

Hailey Greene  
*Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

Olivia Haugan  
*Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

Jakarla Sharee Hill  
*Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

Samantha Kanalos  
*Forensic Science*

Matthew Zane Morgan  
*Forensic Science*

Patrick Monroy Richmond  
*Forensic Science*

MarJorie McCollum Stephens  
*Forensic Science*

Elizabeth Ann Thornton  
*Forensic Science*

## WALKER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

J. Kerry Waller, Dean

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### BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

Melanie M. Beavers  
*Accounting*

Isaac Blake Thacker  
*Business Administration*

### MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Trinity Martin

Kylar Allen James Potter

## R.H. DANIEL COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Jaime Johnson-Huff, Dean

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### BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

Rylie Ellen Erickson  
*Nursing*

Katie Grace Randall  
*Nursing*

Eboni Brion Teasley  
*Nursing*

Esperanza Zinnen  
*Nursing*

### MASTER OF SCIENCE

Toi Mekhi Watson  
*Speech Language Pathology*

## COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Octavius Mulligan, Dean

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### BACHELOR OF ARTS

Virginia Acker  
*Elementary Education*

Patricia Davidson  
*Special Education*

Jenna Jones Gay  
*Elementary Education*

Mikayla Danielle Oldham  
*Elementary Education*

### MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING

Summer Neona Brackett  
*Art Education*

Maria Coles  
*Art Education*

Niara Grant  
*Art Education*

Rebecca Katherine-Bailey Guidry  
*Elementary Education*

Constance Dion Holden  
*Special Education*

Kaitlyn Grace House  
*Elementary Education*

Jewel Mason  
*Art Education*

Railey Shirley Schramm  
*Elementary Education*

Maria Vinson Whitlow  
*Elementary Education*

Joshua Stephen Wagner  
*History Education*

Kyle Edwin Wilkie  
*History Education*

## **MASTER OF ARTS**

Kelly Adkins  
*Special Education*

Carter Arrington  
*Middle Grades Education*

Mackenzie Michelle Bratton  
*Elementary Education*

Sierra Chapman  
*Elementary Education*

Chaitra Vania Curry  
*Special Education*

Melissa Anne Madden Dubea  
*Elementary Education*

Shavon Garland  
*Educational Studies*

Patricia Goodman  
*Elementary Education*

Samantha Hammontree  
*Elementary Education*

Madison Henderson  
*Elementary Education*

Andelin Hill  
*Elementary Education*

Hailey Kennedy  
*Elementary Education*

Tiana Ledford  
*Elementary Education*

Tamia McClain  
*Elementary Education*

Malinda V. Rangel  
*Elementary Education*

Casey Tatum Shostak  
*Elementary Education*

Shacandice Thomas  
*Elementary Education*

Akeyla Thomas  
*Elementary Education*

Cody William Trautner  
*Educational Studies*

Kathryn Weaver  
*English Education*

Bailey Rae Webb  
*Elementary Education*

Chelsea Wilkes  
*Educational Studies*

## **MASTER OF EDUCATION**

Adrienne Bowden  
*School Counseling*

Hope Copelan  
*School Counseling*

Henrietta Denise Davis  
*School Counseling*

Diana Lewis  
*School Counseling*

McKenzi Oberg  
*School Counseling*

Mellissa Ann Wright  
*School Counseling*

## **EDUCATION SPECIALIST**

Bethany Bembry  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Courtney Bennett  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Viccardo Brown  
*Art Education*

Jessica Dianne Champeau  
*Art Education*

Cecelia Coke  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Rebecca Cole  
*Art Education*

Craig Collins  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Tashasa Boykin  
*Art Education*

John Andrew Cox  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Jennifer J. Danner  
*Art Education*

Takeyma Sebris Duhart, Jr.  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Joel Anthony Dukes  
*Music Education*

Mandy LeAnn Futch  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Shiketa Monique Harper  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Mary Elizabeth Hartmann  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Heather Hurst  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Ana Gabriela Isaac Ingram  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Rachel Jones  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Ann Kuhlman-Johnson  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Daniela Lopez  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Carla Anderson Luke  
*Art Education*

Lori Ann Millwood  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Kevin Mitchell  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Rebecca L. Murphy  
*Art Education*

Jennifer OBremski  
*Art Education*

Amy Payne  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Debra Peavler  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Megan Elizabeth Pitts  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Lindsey Anne Price  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Hannah Reppert  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Bryce Jarrod Sellers  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Sarah Bethany Shiver  
*Music Education*

Brittany Nicole Taylor  
*Art Education*

Sarah Matilyn Teague  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Mary Wedlund  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Nikki N. Williams  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Courtney Cook Willingham  
*Music Education*

Dabney Wright  
*Curriculum & Instruction*

Linn Zamora  
*Art Education*

## DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

### **Stephen Cary Hardwick**

B.S. – Toccoa Falls College

M.A.C.E. – Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

M.Ed. – University of Georgia

**Dissertation:** *A Story Twice Told: Black Student Academic Proficiency in Public Schools And The Black Church In A Northeast Georgia School District*

Dr. Toni Bailey, Committee Chair

### **Christie Michele Lehman**

B.S. – Toccoa Falls College

M.S. – Fort Valley State University

Ed.S. – Piedmont University

**Dissertation:** *Perspectives from Practice: A Qualitative Study of Inquiry and Integrated Social Studies Through Elementary Teachers' Voices*

Dr. Amy Fouse, Committee Chair

### **Jarred Sherrod Moore**

B.A. – University of Georgia

M.Ed. – Georgia College and State University

Ed.S. – Piedmont University

**Dissertation:** *The Lived Experience of Preparation: A Phenomenological Exploration of Principals as Instructional Leaders*

Dr. Catherine Gardner, Committee Chair

### **Dara Lynn Seamans**

B.S. – University of Tennessee at Martin

M.A. – Western Governors University

Ed.S. – Piedmont University

**Dissertation:** *From Seats to Synergy: Understanding How Classroom Space, Flexible Seating, and Grouping Practices Shape Student Engagement and Collaborative Learning in Elementary Schools*

Dr. Elgin Mayfield, Committee Chair

# PIEDMONT STOLES & CORDS

Graduation stoles and cords represent achievement, success, or membership at Piedmont University.

## R.H. Daniel School of Nursing

Apricot stole

## Athletics

Green stole

## Criminalistics Club

Blue stole

## Organization:

American Marketing Association

Navy Blue, White cord

Campus Activities Board (CAB)

Light Yellow cord

Fellowship of Christian Athletics (FCA)

Royal Blue, Red, Gold cord

Health Science Leadership Academy

Dark Green, Gold, Navy cord

M.A.N.E.

Forest Green, Silver cord

National Student Speech Language Hearing Assoc, NSSLHA

Orange, White cord

Piedmont University Student Nurses Assoc, NSNA

Silver, Light Blue, Purple cord

Piedmont Peer Tutors

Service Pin

Resident Assistants

Service Pin

Roar Student Media Group

Green, White, Black cord

SAIL

Service Pin

Student Government Association

Green, Gold cord

TEAM Piedmont Ambassadors

Forest Green, Black cord

Veterans

Red, White, Blue cord

Zeta Tau Alpha

Teal, Gray cord

## Society:

Alpha Alpha Alpha (Tri-Alpha)

Navy Blue, Gray/Silver cord, and Service Pin

Alpha Chi

Sapphire Blue, Emerald Green cord

Alpha Lambda Delta

Red, Gold, White cord

Alpha Psi Omega

Light Blue, Gold cord

Chi Alpha Sigma

Gold, Black cord, and Gold medallion

College of Nursing and Health Science Honor Society

Old Gold, White cord

Delta Mu Delta

Purple, Gold cord

Kappa Mu Epsilon

Rose Pink, Silver cord

Lillian E. Smith Scholars

White cord

Natural Science Honors Program

White, Gold cord

National Society Leadership and Success

Silver, Black cord

Psi Chi

Blue, Silver cord

Sigma Tau Delta

Cardinal Red, Black cord

Society for Collegiate Journalists

Scarlet, Gray cord

*The list of degree candidates was compiled prior to commencement, and the status of some candidates may have changed since that time.*

*The listing of the names in this program in no way implies an obligation on the part of Piedmont University to award a given degree.*

# COMMENCEMENT

## COMMENCEMENT

When Piedmont was founded in 1897, commencement was a five-day affair filled with speeches, sermons, academic and debating competition, dinners, and—finally—the conferral of degrees. Over the years, the time allotted for commencement was shortened, a reflection of the quickened pace of the modern era. Piedmont University still retains many commencement customs and traditions that date back to the 12th century, including the use of the mace, gonfalon, and academic garb.

## MACE

The Piedmont mace was handcrafted by Dr. Patrick Taylor, former chair of the Department of Art. The staff is carved from American cherry wood, and the handle is leather. The base is cast in bronze. The pommel, located at the bottom of the staff, symbolically represents the foundation of the University and is inscribed with the date 1897.

The crown on top of the mace is a globe representing the University's commitment to the preparation of students for global work and service. The mace and attached seals represent the authority of Piedmont University to award academic degrees as prescribed by the institution's charter from the State of Georgia.

The flame of learning, cast in an alloy of bronze, sterling silver, and gold and mounted on the top of the mace, symbolizes student acquisition of knowledge from an academically accomplished and talented Piedmont University faculty. The tip of the flame forms an open hand representing the quest for spiritual and intellectual development in service to humankind.

## GONFALON

Another Medieval tradition still used in modern commencement traditions at Piedmont University is the gonfalon, a banner hung from a crossbar instead of from a pole as commonly used for flags. A gonfalon is known as a standard, and in Italian tradition the "gonfalonier" is the standard bearer. Piedmont uses a ceremonial gonfalon that bears the University seal and is displayed at the head of the processional column.

## ACADEMIC DRESS

Academic dress originates with the founding of European universities in the 12th century. All Medieval students were clerks (clerici) and wore the dress of the secular clergy. The oldest article of academic dress worn was the robe (roba), a loose gown, over which hung the habit (cappa), usually a kind of tunic with short, wide sleeves. The Medieval hood (caputium) could be gathered around the neck or pulled up on the head as a turban. There were three kinds of caps: the round pileus, reserved for doctoral dignity; the tena, a round cap with strings that were tied under the chin and worn by jurists; and the square birretium.

The basic design of academic costumes in the U.S. was established in 1895 and was first used at Piedmont by the class of 1902. There are three types of gowns, three styles of hoods, and two kinds of cap tassels used for the American academic garb. The bachelor's gown has long, pointed, open sleeves. The master's gown is similar but has longer sleeves that are closed at the bottom. The doctoral gown has full-length lapels of velvet and bell-shaped sleeves with three horizontal velvet bars. The color of gowns is usually black, although some colleges have specified that doctoral students may wear gowns showing distinctive colors.

The hood varies according to respective academic degrees, with the doctoral hood being longer and fuller in shape than the others. The academic field of study can be determined by the color of the velvet facing sewn on the hood. The color represents the academic field of study as follows: white for the arts; gold-yellow for science; drab for business administration; lemon for librarianship; scarlet for theology; brown for fine arts; light blue for education; pink for music; and dark blue for philosophy. The hood is lined in silk displaying the colors of the degree-granting institution. Tassels for bachelor's and master's are black. The doctoral tassels are gold.

Piedmont faculty have earned degrees at a number of post-baccalaureate institutions, and most wear the doctoral hood. The hood colors worn by some Piedmont faculty represent the following academic institutions: purple and gold (Louisiana State University); red and black (University of Georgia); crimson and white (Indiana University); silver and red (Georgia State University); blue and gold (West Virginia University); gold and white (Georgia Institute of Technology); white and light blue (Pennsylvania State University); orange and white (University of Tennessee); crimson and white (University of Alabama); blue and white (University of Kentucky); and blue and buff (The George Washington University).

