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CLASS OF 2025 CELEBRATES WINTER COMMENCEMENT

PRESIDENT KELLY: 'YOU ARRIVED RIGHT ON TIME.'by [Jim Hanchett](#) | December 16, 2025

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Graduates at Christopher Newport University's 2025 Winter Commencement Ceremony were congratulated for arriving "right on time," even though many followed an unconventional path to earning their diploma.

The University honored 134 graduates at a ceremony in Diamondstein Concert Hall that featured the same music, regalia, and traditions of the larger ceremony held in May. President William G. Kelly noted that many of the graduates had needed an extra semester or had moved through college at a quick pace.

"To the Class of 2025, each one of you has a unique story," Kelly said. "Your path to this day may have taken a route you did not expect or plan for. What you envisioned on your first day of college may be very different from the reality you experienced. Here is what doesn't matter much - when you left high school, another college, a job, military service. Here is what does matter - that you arrived. That you arrived here tonight. And let me be clear: You arrived right on time."

"Tonight we gather for a true commencement ceremony for you because you arrived right on time - look around. The setting, the formality, the rituals all send an unmistakable signal. This is commencement, real commencement, even if it isn't done on a balmy spring day," he said.



Just as in May, scores of family members, friends, and supporters of the graduates attended or watched via [livestream](#). Dozens of CNU faculty and staff members also participated in the ceremony. Dr. Jay Paul, the senior member of the faculty, conducted the Investiture of the Mace following the traditional processional. Grace Farris '27 sang the National Anthem and Board of Visitors Rector Christy Morton '01 offered a greeting.

"Demonstrate leadership, commit to lifelong learning and scholarship, serve others with an open heart, and always live with honor - do all of that and you will pay back the support of everyone in this room, everyone watching at home, everyone who has lifted you up," Morton said. "Most importantly, you will reward your faith in yourself and you will truly be a Captain for Life."

President Kelly was joined by Dr. Paul and Provost Quentin Kidd for the conferral of degrees and traditional hooding of graduates. The degrees included the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Music, Master of Arts in Teaching, and Master of Science.

President Kelly also saluted graduates Andrew Ross and Chunjing Neumann. Both are ROTC cadets who will almost immediately continue their service to their country.

The ceremony drew to a close after Nick Mirra '15, president of the CNU Alumni Society, welcomed the graduates into the community of Captains for Life, a distinction President Kelly noted in his closing comments: "Mrs. Kelly and I join with the entire faculty and staff in wishing you long, wonderful lives, full of significance and full of love. You arrived right on time. We are so proud of you. We will never forget you and as always - Go Captains!"
