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COMMENCEMENT 2025: HISTORIC AND UNIQUELY PERSONAL

CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT'S 100TH CONFERRING OF DEGREES WILL BE A DAY FILLED WITH CELEBRATION AND STEEPED IN TRADITION.

by [Kelley McGee](#) | May 8, 2025

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The Class of '25 will take its place in history on May 17th with the 100th Conferral of Degrees. The event will mark a major milestone for the University community and will cap off an unforgettable week celebrating the accomplishments of the more than 1,000 graduates.

Commencement at Christopher Newport is a unique and highly personalized event that combines the cherished elements of traditional cap-and-gown pomp and circumstance with all the beloved traditions Captains treasure. The day is designed to create a memorable and meaningful experience that honors the journey of each student and brings the CNU community together.



"First Lady Angie Kelly and I are proud and excited to join you in celebrating your graduation," said President William G. Kelly in a letter to the graduates. "This is truly the highlight of the year for us and we know it will be a day filled with memories you treasure forever. I urge you to take it all in, every tradition, every photo opportunity, every moment with the people at CNU and the people in your life who made this glorious day a reality."

The day will begin with the Baccalaureate Degree Conferral Ceremony on the Great Lawn and a grand processional led by bagpipers. This year, the procession route has been extended, starting by the Ferguson Center for the Arts, winding through the campus gates on University Place, and then entering the majestic Great Lawn through the McMurrin Hall arches. This is followed by degree conferral, addresses by President Kelly and Board of Visitors Rector Christy T. Morton '01, and the singing of the alma mater. The ceremony concludes with a grand recessional featuring the faculty gauntlet, a treasured tradition where the faculty depart first and then form a line on either side of the pathway through which the graduates walk.

Graduates' names are not called during the Conferral Ceremony, nor as they walk across the stage—that will happen later during the Grad Walk, an exciting recent addition to Christopher Newport's Commencement. The Grad Walk is organized by college blocks. Here's how it works:

- At their assigned time, graduates join the Grad Walk Queue with their guests and arrive at the stage to have their names read and to receive their diploma covers.
- Graduates are greeted on stage by Mrs. Kelly, President Kelly, Rector Morton and other dignitaries, while their guests are guided to a prime spot in front of the stage for a clear view of this important moment.
- After crossing the stage, graduates follow the exit path and reunite with their family members and guests.
- For those with mobility restrictions, there will be a special seating area in front of the stage where they can wait until their group arrives.
- For those joining from afar, the Conferral Ceremony and the Grad Walk will be [livestreamed](#).

Following the Degree Conferral Ceremony and Grad Walk, graduates have an opportunity to enjoy time-honored Christopher Newport traditions with family and friends, including: the penny toss, visiting the Gregory P. Klich Alumni House, attending departmental receptions, and ringing the bell. Graduates are welcome to bring as many guests as they like, and there will be plenty of activities and celebrations on campus for both graduates and their guests.

Additional ceremonies include:

- A special Athletics Commencement Ceremony for spring season athletes unable to attend Commencement due to competitions will be held Tuesday, May 13, and will be [livestreamed](#).
- The Graduate Studies Commencement Ceremony will take place on Friday, May 16, from 2-3:30 pm. and will be [livestreamed](#).
- The Latin Honors Ceremony will be held Friday, May 16, at 10 a.m. and will be [livestreamed](#).

Commencement caps off a full week of beloved Christopher Newport traditions, including the Grad Dash, Field Day, Wednesday Walk with Seniors, the Senior Gift Toast, the Class of '75 50th reunion, the President's Leadership Program Ceremony, the Candlelight Ceremony and fireworks, Latin Honors, and ROTC Commissioning.

Find answers to frequently asked questions, relevant contact information and lyrics to the alma mater and more on the [Commencement website](#).

