

2018 COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER Selection Process and Timeline

Please review the following information about the selection process and timeline.

DRAFTS ARE DUE BY 4:30 P.M. Monday, March 20.

Drafts received after this deadline will not be considered.

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- ✓ Completing degree requirements and eligible to participate in June Commencement ceremony (those student teaching in the fall are still eligible to speak)
- ✓ No Honor Code or J-Board Violations
- ✓ No felony record

(Note: Please make sure you are eligible before submitting a draft.)

HOW DOES THE SELECTION PROCESS WORK?

1. Drafts due by 4:30 p.m. March 20 to the Dean of Students Office (Raymond House)
2. Yannie removes the author's name and distributes drafts to the selection committee.
3. Committee members independently review and rank each draft.
4. Committee rankings are compiled to select finalists.
5. Finalists are required to meet with a speaking consultant in the Center for Academic Success to work on and improve their delivery.
6. Finalists present remarks for the committee (April TBD) and the speaker is selected.
7. The speaker refines remarks with faculty assistance prior to Commencement.

WHO IS ON THE SELECTION COMMITTEE?

- Provost Kodat
- Professor Celia Barnes, English
- Professor Kathy Privatt, Theatre Arts
- Dean Gray
- VP Chris Card
- Craig Gagnon, Associate Vice President of Communications
- Paris Wicker, Associate Dean of Students
- Nyanna "Yannie" Dixon, Residence Hall Director, Trever, Exec, and Draheim
- Senior class officers (EXCEPT any who are nominated and choose to submit a draft)

WHAT IS THE COMMITTEE LOOKING FOR?

As outlined in the committee's letter, your remarks should be *meaningful and light-hearted* and reflect the *collective experiences* of your class. You can see that this description is fairly open-ended, leaving much room for creativity and variety. A five-minute speech is usually two to two and a half pages of double-spaced, twelve point font. Enclosed is an example of a past speech so you can see what has been chosen in the past. We hope, as you compose your remarks, you will enjoy reflecting on the past few years and what they have meant.

Again, congratulations, and good luck! Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Nyanna "Yannie" Dixon
Residence Hall Director
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Sample Submission

My fellow graduates: today is the day that we finally pop our “Lawrence bubble”.

But like so many others, I’ve always hated change. I remember not wanting to leave 5th grade to go to middle school, and not wanting to move on to high school after 8th grade. But I especially did not want to come to college. I loved high school. It was familiar, I had grown up with all my classmates, I loved my town and the people there, and I didn’t want to leave my family. And I really did not want to go start over in some place totally new with 1,500 strangers.

I know we can all relate to this on some level. Though many of you were probably way more excited than I was, and more than happy to get to start over. But admit it- we all felt that fear- the fear of the unknown.

1,376 days ago, we all stood across the street and smiled for our class photo in front of the chapel. I’ve re- examined that picture lately, and though we are all smiling, the anxiety is clear on our faces. There was so much happening so fast and so much we didn’t know. Like was our roommate going to be a total nightmare and keep us up at all hours while they blasted their music? Or was the food going to be disgusting like they show in the movies? And just how “writing intensive” was Freshmen Studies really going to be?

Well, we’ve figured all that out by now- but that didn’t even begin to scratch the surface of all the questions we would have as we continued our journey through our four years here at Lawrence.

I ended up going through more change in these four years than in the 18 years prior. I changed my career objective, added a minor, and lived abroad. Making all these decisions and going through changes was extremely difficult. But I truly believe that Lawrence gave me the courage and ability to do so.

Prospective student info packets say “Lawrence- the power of individualized learning”. And since they day we stepped foot onto this campus, we’ve heard about the “Lawrence difference”. Well, after completing four years here, I can tell you, that was the most honest advertising I saw of the multiple schools I looked at. Lawrence exhibits individualized learning in the highest form. We’re given our professors home and cell phone numbers, administrators take us out for dinner and we’re invited to parties at the president’s house! It is because of this support that we feel comfortable enough to make tough decisions and to grow into who we are. Lawrence encourages us to change our minds and change them again without fear of looking stupid, or making the wrong choice. Campus life, professors, advisors, directors are all there to hold our hands when we want it and give us a push when we need it.

We not only developed close relationships with our professors and administrators, but with our fellow classmates as well. Our roommates were the first of the many friends we would make in our four years here. If you’re as lucky as I was, you got a roommate was your perfect match and helped you navigate the trials of freshman year and beyond. But if it wasn’t your roommate, it was a classmate or someone in your studio. Look around, who was it that you connected with and who was always there for you as you navigated the tricky waters that college brings.

There is undeniable comfort in knowing that we aren’t alone. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, we will be joining approximately 1.1 million other college graduates this year. There is so much that is unknown about these coming years and there is no denying how scary it is. But you know what? We shouldn’t be scared, because we’re doing it together. So instead of focusing on all the unknowns, on all the things we’re unsure of, lets focus on what we DO know. We know that Bon Appetit’s best lunches are the soft pretzel and corn dog days. We know what Plato’s cave represents (kinda). We know that

there is nothing worse than an 8:30 class on the 4th floor of Main. And we know that the real Martin Guerre didn't return until much later. More practically, we know how to be critical thinkers, we know about standing up for what we believe in and not standing aside when there is an injustice. We know how to push ourselves.

I stand here today with all of you, on the brink of the biggest change yet. Now, much like four years ago, I don't want to leave all 1,500 of you and go off into a world of 8 billion new strangers. We may still have questions, and may still be afraid of change but Lawrence has given us all it can to help us through this.

So let's take the plunge and face this together, head on. Always remembering the lessons learned and relationships formed here, and always reaffirm the Lawrence University Honor Code.

Thank you, and congratulations.