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WKU makes changes to graduation ceremonies

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Western Kentucky University graduates receive their diplomas Saturday, December 9, 2017, during WKU's 182nd commencement at E.A. Diddle Arena. (Bac Totrong/photo@bgdailynews.com)

Bac Totrong/Daily News

Western Kentucky University is reimagining old traditions and beginning new ones with changes to its graduation ceremonies this year.

Among the changes is a move to a single commencement ceremony Friday on the football field at Houchens-Smith Stadium.

The ceremony, which will confer degrees and certificates to 3,283 spring and summer graduates, will take place after a new Topper Walk event that begins at 5 p.m.

During the Topper Walk, graduates will march from the Kentucky Museum to the stadium, waving red towels at those they pass. Participating students are asked to arrive at the museum by 4 p.m.

After commencement, graduates are invited to attend a Big Red Bash on WKU's South Lawn. The event will feature music from Tyrone Dunn and Kin-foke, fireworks, strawberries and champagne under the alumni tent and an opportunity for graduates to get portraits from a photographer.

On Saturday, WKU's six academic colleges will honor their graduates in special ceremonies throughout the day in E.A. Diddle Arena. Graduates will walk the line and shake hands with WKU President Timothy Caboni.

The schedule Saturday is as follows: College of Health and Human Services at 8 a.m.; University College at 10 a.m.; Ogden College of Science and Engineering at noon; College of Education and Behavioral Sciences at 2 p.m.; Potter College of Arts & Letters at 4 p.m.; and Gordon Ford College of Business at 6 p.m.

WKU Registrar Tiffany Robinson said the changes are designed to give graduates and their families a more personal experience with WKU.

"This gives them that opportunity to just have a little fun," she said.

The new Big Red Bash, for example, is meant to allow families to meet faculty and staff members who made a difference during the graduates' time at WKU.

“With this being a little more intimate, it gives them an opportunity to connect with students and their families,” Robinson said of WKU employees attending the event.

The outdoor commencement ceremony will be the first one held since 2006 and will take place rain or shine, according to a WKU news release. Robinson said graduates will be conferred in groups instead of calling individual names.



The ceremony will also feature the commissioning of 17 ROTC cadets and the top undergraduate and graduate scholars being recognized.

Those with questions about commencement can call the registrar’s office at 270-745-3351.

Several other events are planned leading up to WKU’s graduation. They include the university’s Lavender Recognition Ceremony, which honors graduates in the LGBT community. That ceremony takes place at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Augenstein Alumni Center. Graduates involved with the university’s Intercultural Student Engagement Center will be honored during an event at 2 p.m. Wednesday at the Downing Student Union auditorium.

More events are listed online at wku.edu/news/index.php?view=article&articleid=6420.

Meanwhile, Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College honored its graduates in a ceremony Friday at the Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center. As many as 736 graduates were awarded 2,278 certificates, diplomas and degrees, according

to a news release.

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