Graduation Banquet FAQs:

What is the banquet?
Each spring, the School of Public Affairs & Administration (SPAA) hosts an annual graduation reception and banquet to recognize and celebrate all undergraduate, MPA and PhD students who have graduated or are graduating during the current academic year (summer, fall and spring semesters).

When and where is it held?
The 2016 SPAA banquet will be held on Friday, April 29 in the Ballroom (level 5) of the Kansas Union. The event kicks off with a reception from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. in the Jayhawk Room (level 5). The banquet then starts around 6:30 and will last until about 9:00 p.m.

How many people will be there?
Typically, a couple hundred people attend the banquet, including SPAA faculty and staff, graduating students, family and friends.

Can I invite guests to the banquet?
Absolutely! Invite anyone with whom you would like to share this moment of celebration and recognition. There is no limit to the number of guests you may invite. Registration information can be found on the School’s website (kupa.ku.edu/graduation).

How much does it cost to attend the banquet?
The banquet is complimentary for all graduates. The cost for each guest is $30, current KU SPAA students are $20 each, children ages 2-10 are $15 each and children under age 2 are free.

Is registration for the banquet required?
Yes, we ask graduating students and guests who plan to attend the banquet to register by Wednesday April 20, 2016. Complete the registration form on our website (kupa.ku.edu/graduation). Advance registration is necessary so we may obtain an accurate headcount for catering.

Where should I park?
Parking is available in the parking garage adjacent to the Kansas Union, which offers covered access to the Union building. There is a $1.50/hour fee for parking, which can be paid with a credit card. For more information see parking.ku.edu/visitor-parking. Other parking options are available on streets and in parking lots near the Kansas Union. Campus maps are available at places.ku.edu/map.

Is the Union wheelchair-accessible? Yes.
How do people dress for the banquet?
Typically, people dress up a bit. Men wear a suit or jacket and tie, and women wear a dress or business suit. Those who have uniforms – law enforcement, fire fighters, etc. – may choose to wear them.

How many students are in the SPAA academic programs?
The majority of SPAA students are in the MPA program. In any given year, total SPAA enrollment includes about 75 undergraduates (the undergrad program is only available at the Edwards Campus), 15 PhD students, and 150 MPA students from all three campuses. Only a portion of these students graduate in any given year, but certainly, MPA is the largest program in the School and at the graduation banquet.

How is the Ballroom arranged?
A large stage is set up at the front of the room. It stands about 3 steps above the ballroom floor. The floor is full of round tables with 8 settings on each table. Groups may want to be there when the Ballroom opens at 6:00 p.m. to claim their tables.

What happens at the banquet?
The banquet begins with a brief welcome from the SPAA Director and a buffet dinner. Then, as with most banquets, there are a few recognitions and short speeches. Among the recognitions are notable graduates, alumni and SPAA partners. The School selects one outstanding graduate from each of our programs – undergraduate, MPA intern option and MPA career option, and doctorate – to speak about the program and public service. These presentations are typically short and thought-provoking.

Then, each of the cohorts is recognized.

• Graduating undergraduate students – usually 15 or so – are called to the stage to be recognized individually. A favorite memory of each graduate (collected in advance of the banquet) is read aloud.

• Graduating PhD students – usually 1-2 per year – are called to the stage and presented by his/her advisor.

• Graduating MPA students – usually 40 or so – proceed to the stage in their regalia following intermission and are called to the stage individually to be hooded by SPAA faculty. A favorite memory of each graduate (collected in advance of the banquet) is read aloud.

What is the MPA hooding ceremony?
This is a special ceremony during which students who have earned their MPA are hooded by a faculty member. During intermission, the faculty and graduating MPA students go to an adjacent meeting room to don their caps and gowns. Then they all parade back into the ballroom when the intermission is over. It’s a very colorful and dramatic entrance. Faculty members go up on the stage and line up across the back edge. MPA graduates wait on the front side of the room.

Each student is then called by name. He or she steps up to the stage and:

• shakes hands and is photographed with the School Director (Reggie Robinson);
• is hooded by a faculty member, then

• walks across the stage, shaking hands with the remainder of the assembled faculty.

Prior to the ceremony, each student is asked to submit a few words about a memorable aspect of their MPA career. Those brief remarks are read aloud as the student makes his or her way across the stage. The favorite memory can be anything significant that comes to mind when you think of your MPA. Past graduates have mentioned particular classes, faculty members, humorous or memorable experiences, etc.

After all graduates have been introduced, they gather on stage as a group, and typically, John Nalbandian leads the entire room in singing the alma mater and doing the Rock Chalk cheer.

The SPAA graduation banquet concludes after this.

**Are students inducted into Pi Alpha Alpha at the banquet?**
Pi Alpha Alpha is the honor society for schools of public affairs and administration. Student eligibility in Pi Alpha Alpha is determined in advance of the banquet. Eligible students are contacted and given the opportunity to join Pi Alpha Alpha, which requires a $50 payment. At the graduation banquet, Pi Alpha Alpha inductees are presented with a pin and certificate. Students who have earned Pi Alpha Alpha honors are also designated in the graduation program. There is no formal induction ceremony.

**Do I need to have a cap and gown?**
*Only MPA graduates will wear a cap and gown at this graduation banquet, in addition to a tassel and master’s hood.*

**For undergraduates,** graduation regalia consists of two pieces: a cap with a tassel and a gown. You will **not** need regalia to participate in the SPAA graduation banquet, but will need it to participate in the University’s commencement ceremony.

**For MPA graduates,** graduation regalia consists of three pieces: a cap with tassel, a gown, and a master’s hood. The hood is black with a crimson and blue interior (each school has its own colors) and white velvet lining (each academic specialty has its own colors as well). You will need regalia to participate in the SPAA graduation banquet and any of the University graduation events.

**For doctoral graduates,** graduation regalia consists of three pieces: a cap with tassel, a gown, and a doctoral hood. You will **not** need regalia to participate in the SPAA graduation banquet, but will need it to participate in the University graduation events.

**Where do I get regalia?**
All regalia can be purchased or rented from the Kansas Union Bookstore (kubookstore.com/c-230-graduation.aspx).

The School has some master’s regalia donated by former graduates that is available for you to borrow on a first come, first served basis. Email Brooklyn Winkel at puad2@ku.edu if you’re
interested in this option. She will need to know your height and US hat size  
(johnhelmer.com/level.itml/icOid/54).

**Will students’ guests be introduced?**
There just isn’t time to introduce guests individually during the ceremony, so we’ll applaud the audience as a whole for their support of the graduates. SPAA faculty and staff would love to meet your guests before or after the banquet.

**Are small children welcome?**
Yes. They are certainly welcome if you feel their presence would enhance your enjoyment of the evening. You might position yourself near an exit in case they get bored or restless.

**What about the University-wide hooding ceremony and walking down the hill?**
Many SPAA graduates enjoy participating university-wide KU graduation events.

MPA graduates may want to participate in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences master’s hooding ceremony. Typically, participating students ask one of their professors to “hood” them at that ceremony. (Note: if you would like a specific professor to hood you, please contact that professor directly, either via email or phone, well in advance of the ceremony.) For more information on this event, please visit the College Office of Graduate Affairs website (clas.ku.edu/coga/graduation/ceremonies).

Doctoral graduates may want to participate in the doctoral hooding ceremony. For more information about the doctoral hooding ceremony, please visit the Graduate Studies website (graduate.ku.edu/doctoral-hooding-ceremony) or contact them at graduate@ku.edu or 785-864-8040.

All graduates are eligible to participate in the university-wide commencement ceremony that takes place at 10:30 a.m. on May 15 at Memorial Stadium. Students assemble at the Campanile for the traditional walk down the hill into the stadium. Friends and family should either find a place on the hill or in the stadium when they can see and cheer their passing graduate. See commencement.ku.edu/ for more on commencement or contact the Office of Public Affairs at kupublicaffairs@ku.edu or 785-864-7100.

For those participating in the commencement ceremony, we offer a couple of suggestions:

- If the day is at all warm, dress lightly beneath your robe…that black synthetic fabric is hot!
- If you want to walk as a group, gather somewhere at the edge of the chaos – say in front of Wescoe – then walk over to the Campanile.
- Decide early whether you’re going to take a seat and enjoy the graduation ceremony, or just march down the hill, across the field, and out the north end of the stadium.
- Take your cellphone so you can find friends among the thousands of people who will gather on the hill.
- Have fun!

The University will send you more information on graduation events.
Any other questions? Please contact Angie Soden (angiesoden@ku.edu or 785-864-9090) or Brooklyn Winkel (puad2@ku.edu or 785-864-3527).