



DOWNSTATE
HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

GRADUATING STUDENT HANDBOOK 2026



GETTING READY

GRADUATION APPLICATION

The first step in preparing for graduation involves filing a Graduation Application on-line through Banner Self-Service, our student information system. We will send information to you by email in early 2026 about logging on to complete the Application. Please make sure you regularly check your Downstate email account. The information that you will be providing is used to order your diploma, and to collect information regarding your participation in Commencement Exercises. Only those who fill out the application, regardless of participation, will appear in the program. Upon completion of the Application, you will receive a confirmation and information about ordering your Commencement attire. The deadline to order Commencement attire is **March 20th**.



DIPLOMA

The diploma is ordered with your name as it appears on your student record.

Can I print my preferred/chosen name on my diploma? Yes, students may elect to print their preferred/chosen name on the diploma. However, for students who attend or plan to attend professional schools (e.g. Medicine, Health Professions, or Nursing, etc.): Before opting to print your preferred/chosen name on your SUNY Downstate diploma, please take into consideration that professional licensing requirements often require you to use your legal name. For example, application and licensure and federal employment/guidelines require the use of the legal name. Therefore, not using your legal name on a diploma may result in the rejection, delay, scrutiny, and/or requirements for additional proof of identification associated with any applications for employment, licensure, credentialing, visa applications, and/or other processes that require verification of your identity.

Important Note for All Students: Although SUNY Downstate considers the diploma to be a ceremonial document, some countries may require your diploma (in conjunction with your official transcript) for various legal, immigration, and employment purposes. Choosing to print your preferred/chosen name on your diploma may result in unforeseen complications due to the discrepancy between your diploma and other documents (e.g. transcript, passport, birth certificate, etc.) that contain your legal name. To avoid such complications, we recommend printing your legal name on your diploma if you plan to live, study, or work outside of the United States.

Please note: Diplomas are ordered in your name at the **time of graduation**. Diplomas will not be ordered with a name that changes **AFTER** the graduation date.

PARTICIPATION IN COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

You must fill out the on-line Graduation Application **whether or not you intend to participate** in the Commencement Exercises. Complete the sections *Curriculum Selection*, *Graduation Year Selection*, *Graduation Ceremony Selection* (or indication that you will **NOT** be attending), *Academic Attire Order*, and *Diploma Name Selection* on the on-line application. The Application must be completed on-line by **Friday, March 13, 2026**.

You will be able to print out a Graduation Application Summary following completion of the Application.

After this deadline, it may still be possible for you to participate in commencement, however:

- you will incur a late fee,
 - you will not be listed in the Commencement Program, and
 - you will not have access to tickets to the ceremony on May 13th.
 - You will also incur a late fee for your purchase of Commencement attire.
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FACULTY HOODERS

Your class will be asked to nominate and vote on two faculty members who will hood graduating students at Commencement.

SPECIAL HOODER REQUEST

A **parent, spouse, or sibling** who is an **MD** may hood you at Commencement to personalize your graduation from medical school. No other requests will be considered. You may have only **one** hooter.

To request a special hooter, please complete the separate Qualtrics Special Hooter application; the link is in the commencement application. The special hooter application must be completed by **Friday, March 6th, 2026**. *Please note that this is a week earlier than the Graduation Application Deadline.* Special hooders will be allowed to participate **if they adhere to this deadline**. *Please note that this deadline precedes the Commencement Application deadline by a week. Special hooders must be dressed in official Commencement attire, which can be ordered from our attire provider. There is a separate link for Graduate and Special Hooter attire.* Confirmation and additional information will be sent to you and your special hooter. If you or s/he does not receive confirmation by March 27, 2026, please contact Schuyler Hooke at schuyler.hooke@downstate.edu.

Late applications will be accommodated, if possible. Late fees will be applied.

COMMENCEMENT FEE

The graduation fee for all graduating students is \$90, non-refundable.

Students pay this fee whether or not they attend Commencement.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for graduation, you must achieve the following:

- Satisfactory completion of the Foundations 1 and 2 curricula;
- Satisfactory completion of all clinical course requirements as delineated in the College Bulletin;
- Satisfactory remediation of any academic deficiencies;
- Be in good standing (i.e., not on academic or clinical or disciplinary probation at the time of graduation);
- Have no disciplinary charges in progress or pending;
- Pass Step 1 and Step 2 of the United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) as specified by College policy;
- Satisfy all financial obligations due SUNY Downstate (see page 8);
- Complete all mandatory financial aid exit interviews if you received financial aid while at SUNY Downstate (see page 8);
- Register for and satisfactorily complete all required course work.

GRADUATION HONORS

Upon faculty recommendation and with the approval of the Academic Promotions Committee, students may be awarded the degree of Doctor of Medicine with *Distinction in Research* or *Commendation in Investigative Scholarship*.

Honors are not automatically conferred on the basis of fulfillment of numerical requirements or the submission of a report. Such compliance shall serve only to determine eligibility.

Distinction in Research

To be eligible for this award, the student must have demonstrated a prolonged involvement—typically over a period of 1–2 years with *substantial* investment of time—in a basic or clinical project with a faculty mentor of this institution. The work should be done while enrolled at Downstate Medical Center. Students will be expected to show evidence of substantive intellectual input into the project. Mere technical participation will not be deemed sufficient grounds for conferral of this graduation honor. Additional information regarding eligibility can be found in the *2025-26 Student Handbook* on pages 167-178.

Completed research project reports must be submitted to GradWithHonorsSubmissions-COM@downstate.edu no later than **March 27, 2026**. M.D./Ph.D. candidates may not use their thesis research for this distinction.

Commendation in Investigative Scholarship

This category of graduation honor is for students who have participated in either basic or clinical research for a limited period of time or who have participated in a project that has not achieved maturity. The work should be completed while enrolled at SUNY Downstate. The student must demonstrate both technical and intellectual input. Candidates must be eligible for graduation. Academic performance in medical school shall not be considered in conferring the award. A faculty committee will review project reports. The same deadlines as Distinction in Research apply. M.D.-Ph.D. candidates may not use their thesis research for this distinction.

Additional information regarding eligibility can be found in the *2025-2026 Student Handbook*.

STOLES AND CORDS:

The Departments of Student Life and Student Affairs at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University supports the wearing of honors cords, medallions, stoles, and insignia at Commencement ceremonies by students who have earned these privileges at SUNY Downstate through any of the following achievements:

- membership in a college-recognized honors society
- membership in good standing in a college-recognized professional or service organization
- military service

Funding for honors cords and accessories is the responsibility of the sponsoring program, honor society, office, or organization, as deemed appropriate by that program. Any honors program/society, scholarship fund, or recognized student professional, cultural, or service organization that wishes honor a student with a stole or cords to wear during Commencement must receive approval from the Department of Student Life and administer the process for ordering, distributing, and identify funding sources.

Student Activity Fees cannot be used to fund these accessories.

ISSUANCE OF DIPLOMAS

The Academic Promotions Committee approves students for degree completion and the awarding of a diploma three times each year – May 31, June 15 and December 31. However, there is one College of Medicine Commencement Exercise each year in May. Refer to the 2025-2026 Student Handbook.

Medical students who complete ALL graduation requirements, as outlined above and whose grades have been received in the Office of the Registrar by May 15, 2026 and have NO outstanding financial or administrative obligation to the institution will have their diplomas mailed to them at the address provided to us on the Commencement Application.

All students completing the requirements for the M.D. degree after June 15th but before December 31st 2026, will receive a December diploma and be eligible to march in the Commencement Exercise the following year. If the student completes requirements by June 30th, prior to starting a residency program, the Office of the Registrar will provide a letter of completion of requirements for the M.D. degree. Any questions regarding this procedure should be addressed to the Office of the Registrar.

STUDENT ACCOUNTS

All graduating students must satisfy all financial obligations owed to SUNY Downstate, including at least eight semesters of full-time tuition (except transfer students and students admitted with advance standing who must pay two semesters of tuition for every year of medical education completed at SUNY Downstate).

LIBRARY FINES

Unpaid fines will result in a borrower being blocked from checking out additional materials and may cause a delay in graduation. Overdue fines may be paid online or by cash or check at the Bursar's Office.

The deadline to clear library fines is the last day of the semester prior to graduation.

When payment is made, send screenshot or copy of receipt to access.services@downstate.edu, or bring a copy to the library.

Any student who has not met all financial and administrative obligations to the institution will not receive his or her diploma until cleared by the appropriate office.

STUDENT LOAN EXIT INTERVIEWS

Office of Financial Aid

The following information applies to students who have taken a Student Loan during their attendance at Downstate. Prior to graduation, you must complete the Student Loan Exit Interview. If you have a Wax Loan, you must complete an exit interview for that loan according to instructions you will receive from the Office of the Bursar. More information can be found here:

<https://slsc.albany.edu/borrowers/>

1. To access your student loans data on the NSLDS, visit here:

- <https://studentaid.gov>
- Choose Log In
- Enter your FSA ID & Password
- Accept the Terms and Conditions
- After you've entered the system, hover over your name which is in the top right of the screen.
- Select My Aid
- Next, select Download My Aid Data which is to the right.
- Select Continue.

This downloaded text file can now be sent to your financial advisor for analysis and recommendations based on your specific goals. Again, please protect this file as it contains personal financial information about your student loans.

2. Then click on the Exit Counseling tab and complete the Exit Interview.

The Financial Aid Office at Downstate, your lender, and your guarantor will all automatically be notified that you have completed the Exit Interview. No further paperwork is required. However, an in person AAMC debt management session will be held in the Spring.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Financial Aid should you have any questions.

- financialaid@downstate.edu
- 718-270-2488

Bursar's Office

All loans (LDS and PCL) borrowed through campus-based loan programs are exited by the Bursar's Office.

LDS, PCL and Wax Loan Borrowers – are required to go through the exit interview process prior to graduation. You will be notified by email to come into our office to complete the exit interview. If you have not heard from us via email by the end of March, or you will not be on campus during the Spring semester, call (718) 270-1078 to arrange for an appointment

Perkins Borrowers – are exited electronically by the Bursar's Office. No appearance or further paperwork is required by you...the student.

SCHOOL EMAIL ACCOUNT

Graduating students School email account will remain active for a period of three (3) months following your graduation date.

STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE

Any student who currently has health insurance through the SUNY Downstate School plan, and will not have other coverage through a job on August 1, 2026, is eligible to purchase continuing coverage from the broker who handles our insurance. You only have 30 days from the end of coverage (July 31, 2026), to complete your enrollment. Please contact:

Kelly Anthony
HSA Consulting, Inc.
2477 Stickney Point Road, Suite 207B
Sarasota, Florida 34231
E-mail: kelly@hsac.com
Telephone: (888) 978-8355 | Fax: (941) 925-2001

You're almost there!



CEREMONIES & CELEBRATIONS

AWARDS DAY

Monday, May 11, 2026

Early afternoon, time to be announced.

Alumni Auditorium

The Awards Day program will include greetings from your class president as well as recognition of outstanding medical students with a variety of college and departmental awards. Students receiving awards will be notified prior to the date, but all graduating students are welcome to attend. Each student will receive two tickets for family and or friends to attend.

A reception in the Atrium will follow.

SENIOR WEEK AT DOWNSTATE

All graduating medical students are invited to participate in Senior Week. Activities are planned by your class council in the weeks leading up to graduation and in the past have included picnics, a dinner dance, and a wine tour. Look for details in shortly and make plans to participate with your friends and classmates.



COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

Wednesday Afternoon
May 13, 2026
1:00 pm
The Amphitheater at Coney Island
3052 W. 21st Street B
Brooklyn, NY 11224

Downstate Health Sciences University will honor all eligible members of the Class of 2026 at its Spring Commencement Exercises. The ceremony includes the academic procession, greetings from the President, and Commencement speakers. Each graduating student walks across stage and is recognized by name. Academic attire is required.



TICKETS

Tickets are required for all guests.

All participating students will receive 4 tickets for general admission into the Amphitheater. Requests for additional tickets must be submitted through the on-line Graduation Application and will be accommodated based on availability. The venue requires that all guests, *including infants/toddlers who do not require their own seat*, must have a ticket.

Ticket pick-up information will be available in early April.

ACADEMIC ATTIRE

Degree candidates who wish to participate in the Commencement Exercises **are required to wear academic attire** and to march with members of the faculty and honored guests in the academic procession.

Once you submit your Commencement Application, you will receive confirmation that it has been received. That confirmation will include a link to Oak Hall who is our contracted provider of academic attire. Click on the link and order your own attire which will be sent to an address that you provide. Each degree level has a drop-down menu displaying each program at Downstate. Find your degree/program which will have the appropriate attire. You will pay Oak Hall directly and they will ship to you. Oak Hall's site will close on **March 20th** for guaranteed delivery by Commencement.

Please note: Academic attire will NOT be available at the Coney Island Amphitheater. You must bring your attire with you to graduation. You will not be allowed to march without attire.

SPECIAL HOODERS

Special hooders must be wearing academic attire and will be seated separately in the amphitheater. They will process with the faculty, but will require tickets. They are also required to report to the main Boardwalk entrance at 12:00 p.m. where they will be instructed where to go to line up. Special hooders needing attire must order it from Oak Hall using a separate link from that to order Graduate attire. A special mailing will be sent to all special hooders in late March.

To request a special hooder, you must submit the **separate Special Hooder Application**. This is a Qualtrics form, the link is in the Banner Self-Service Commencement application. The Special Hooder Application must be submitted by **March 6th, 2026**. *Please note: this is a week earlier than the final student application deadline.* Once this has been completed, a link will be sent for the hooder to order attire from Oak Hall.

WHAT TO EXPECT ON COMMENCEMENT DAY

Graduation will begin promptly at 1:00 pm and should last approximately **two and one-half hours**. This information will be important to you if you are making luncheon reservations.

The Amphitheater at Coney Island is located at 3052 West 21st Street, Brooklyn. You will enter the venue from the Coney Island Boardwalk. There is a stairway and ramp to the Boardwalk at the end of 21st Street.

The closest parking is at the Cyclones Baseball field, Maimonides Stadium. Enter at 1904 Surf Avenue. Park at the back of the lot, closer to the Boardwalk, (near the famous Parachute drop ride.) You can get to the Boardwalk from the lot and walk about a block west. You will see the Amphitheater sign from the parking lot.

The venue is also accessible by public transit. Take the D,F,N, or Q train to the last stop: Coney Island – Stillwell Avenue. It is about a 15-minute walk on the Boardwalk from the station, or you can take the B36 bus two stops west from Stillwell Avenue to 21st Street.

Graduates

All graduates must report with their academic attire no later than **12:00 p.m.** to the Boardwalk “Park” entrance to line up in the park behind the amphitheater. You will not be returning to this robing area. Do **not** carry personal belongings with you. Leave your belongings with one of your guests.

Promptly at 12:15 pm, the staff will begin to line you up alphabetically for the processional. At 12:45, the line will be moved to the back of the arena.

If you arrive late, you will not be sitting with your classmates and will cross the stage at the end of the College of Medicine graduates.

Guests

All guests will enter through the main amphitheater entrance off the Boardwalk. They will go through a metal detector. All seating is **general admission**, and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Guests will not be permitted to enter the venue before 12:00 pm, please keep this in mind if you want your guests to hold any personal belongings.

As the venue fills up, areas will be closed off and guests arriving will be directed to seating that is available. Please plan accordingly. To maintain the dignity of the ceremony, guests will be asked by the ushers to keep the aisles clear.

Once the faculty and student processions begin, guests who are not already in the venue will not be permitted to enter the venue until the graduates and the faculty are seated.

AWARDING OF DEGREES

During the ceremony, each candidate will have his/her name read aloud, walk across the stage, shake hands with the President and the Dean, and be hooded on stage.

PHOTOGRAPHY INFORMATION

The event will be livestreamed and recorded for the pleasure of your friends and family who are not able to attend. A link will be sent in early May to share. The recorded ceremony will be available on the Downstate website soon after May 13th.

It is recognized that many of the guests wish to have photographs showing their student during the time that they are on stage receiving their diplomas. We have contracted a professional photographer to be on stage to photograph each candidate as s/he shakes hands with the President, and again with their diploma cover. All graduates will be required to fill out a short photograph information sheet on-line using a QR code provided while you are lining up on May 13th. Guests may wish to take their own photographs as well, *from their seats*. Guests are permitted to

use hand-held cameras and self-contained home video equipment using **only** the natural lighting from their seats. (No flash.)

Guests may not stand in the aisles at any time to take pictures or videos.

The ceremony is being sign-language interpreted.

FOLLOWING THE CEREMONY

Audience members will remain at their seats as faculty and students recess out of the venue onto the Boardwalk. Following the recessional, you can meet your guests on the Boardwalk.

VENUE RULES

Please alert your guests to the following important venue rules:

- **Every individual entering must have a ticket.** Infants and toddlers who will be sitting in laps must have a ticket.
- **No balloons.** You can tie them on a railing on the Boardwalk, or present them to your graduate at home.
- **No weapons AT ALL – including pocket-knives, even if you are off-duty law enforcement.** If you have a relative coming who is an off-duty police officer, they will not be allowed in with a weapon. If you have a relative who has a pocket-knife on their keychain, they will not be allowed in.
- **All attendees will have a bag check and will pass through a metal detector. WE RECOMMEND YOU NOT BRING LARGE PURSES OR BAGS.**

Please be sure to share all Commencement information with your guests and make arrangements where you will meet after the ceremony.

STAYING CONNECTED

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Your connection to the SUNY Downstate Medical Center does not end when you receive your diploma. You are part of our great alumni body, with over 10,000 successful graduates who hold positions in many fields including academic medicine, private practice and administration.

Your Alumni Association is a vibrant organization and, although an independent organization, is committed to helping the medical school. We welcome your involvement with our association.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Alumni Association entitles you to use the Medical Library, which has an outstanding collection of books, journals and other services. You also have the option of joining the Student Center with a valid alumni identification card.

ACTIVITIES

The Alumni Association provides a wide range of grants including support for student tuition scholarships and summer research fellowships. The organization also supports the Mentoring & Career Mentoring Programs, The Brooklyn Free Student Clinic, and many other school electives and programs. Reunions are held annually where alumni network and reminisce.

We would like to keep in touch with you about upcoming events and to share our Alumni Today magazine and other mailings. Please update us with your preferred email and any change of address by sending to alumni@downstate.edu

If you would like more information about the Alumni Association or want to find out how to become more involved, please call the Alumni Office at (718) 270-2075 or you can visit our website at downstatemedalumni.com.

There are limitless ways that our students count on us, and we know that we can count on you to stay connected!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March

- 6 Deadline to apply for a Special Hooder
- 13 Deadline to complete the on-line Graduation Application
- 20 Deadline to order academic attire from Oak Hall
- 20 Match Day
- 26 Sail into Spring event

April

- 1-30 Schedule Exit Interview with Bursar and Financial Aid
- 27 - May 8 Transition to Residency (schedule to be determined)

May

- 4 - 9 **Senior Week (events to be determined)**
 - 11 Awards Day
 - 13 Commencement
-

QUESTIONS?

Alumni Affairs	Stephanie DiBrienza	(718) 270-2075
Alumni Association		
Alumni Membership		
Alumni Activities		
Bursar	Avion Ambrose	(718) 270-1078
Exit Interviews for Campus-Based Loans		
Financial Aid	Farah Burnett	(718) 270-2488
Financial Aid Exit Interviews		
Library	Juannetta LeGree	(718) 270-7401
Library Fines		
Student Affairs/Registrar	Edward Graciano	(718) 270-4551
Attendance at Commencement		
Completion of Graduation Requirements		
Graduation Honors		
Ordering and Receiving Diploma		
Health Insurance	Student Affairs	(718) 270-2187
Student Center	Info Desk	(718) 270-2487
Student Life	Schuyler Hooke	(718) 270-2484
Commencement Ceremony		
Guest Issues		
Special Hooders		
Tickets		