

CLASS OF 2026 YEAR-END SENIOR EVENTS & GRADUATION GUIDELINES

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation! We are giving you the following guidelines so that graduation will be a proud memory for all graduates. While we hope it does not become necessary, diplomas may be withheld from any student not following the guidelines set forth at any point through the graduation ceremony.

ONLINE CLASSES COMPLETION

Students who are taking online classes must have assignments and DBAs completed no later than **May 1st** and exams completed no later than **May 8th** if they intend to participate in the June 5th graduation ceremony.

SENIOR BREAKFAST

All senior students are invited to attend the annual Senior Breakfast (This payment is part of the Senior Fees that all students should pay). It will be held on **May 28th at 9 am at the Kontos Hall** (9426 Little Rd, New Port Richey, FL 34654). Students will be required to dress in business casual attire. This would include dress pants, a dress shirt with a tie, socks, and dress shoes, specifically closed shoes (no sneakers, sandals, flip flops, etc.) for boys. For girls, a dress or skirt and blouse or a pant suit. Jeans, shorts, shirts without a collar, tennis shoes, and flip-flops will not be permitted, and students will be sent home to change if they come to the event dressed in this manner.

GRADUATION PRACTICE & SENIOR CHECKOUT

Graduation Practice and Senior Checkout will be held on **May 26th and May 27th at 8:00 am in the RRHS high school gym**. Attendance on both days is **MANDATORY** for participation in graduation. Only students who properly check out and attend graduation practice will be able to participate in the Graduation Ceremony or receive diplomas. The administrator in charge of graduation (Ms. Donlon) **MUST** review and approve any extenuating circumstances. Caps & Gowns are distributed on the second day of Graduation Practice/Senior Checkout to those who have come for both days. There is no exception to this policy.

CEREMONY (LIVE AND ONLINE VIA STREAMING)

The graduation ceremony will be held on **June 5th at 1:30 pm**. Seniors are to report at **12:15 pm** to the University of South Florida Yuengling Center in Tampa in order to line up for the ceremony. Please follow the signs upon entering the University of South Florida event center, as they will direct students and guests to the areas in which they should go. Students should enter at the Corral, which is to the left of Gate A or the Gate A Annex. There will be a livestream of the ceremony with the web address on the Pasco County Schools website.

DRESS EXPECTATIONS

Dress Code for Graduates: Dress pants and dress shirt with tie, a dress or skirt and blouse or pantsuit are recommended outfits. If wearing pants, wear matching/dark socks with dress shoes. No sneakers, sandals, flip flops, etc. are allowed. We recommend that students not wear high heels, as there will be a lot of walking and stair climbing. No visible "bulky" jewelry, scarves, ribbons, etc., are permitted.

Personal Items: Leave purses, cameras, and personal items with a parent or friend in the audience; they may not be taken in during the processional. Flowers or corsages are NOT permitted. (USF sells flowers so they do not let outside flowers in, feel free to leave them in the car and present them to your graduate after the ceremony.)

Graduation Gowns: Please carry your cap and gown into the University of South Florida Yuengling Center. We will not have extra gowns on hand. Make sure that you bring yours to the ceremony.

Graduation Cap: The mortarboard (graduation cap) is to be worn flat with the tassel over the right eye. Once the seniors are declared graduates, the tassel is moved to the left side in unison with the class. We will allow students to decorate their mortarboard, but they **MUST** follow the guidelines at the end of this document. The school administration reserves the right to deem a mortarboard inappropriate for the ceremony, and the student will need to purchase a new mortarboard from Herff Jones, who will be in the Corral area before the ceremony.

BEHAVIOR

Graduation is a momentous occasion not only for the seniors but also for their parents, families, and friends. For that reason, the ceremony is to be held with dignity and courtesy to others. **All participants are expected to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate for the occasion, which includes walking across the stage. All participants must comply with the Pasco County Student Code of Conduct. Inappropriate behavior will result in both students and parents/guardians having to meet with the school administration prior to receiving a diploma.**

Improper noises and distractions will not be permitted. This includes, but is not limited to, noisemakers such as bullhorns, air horns, whistles, cowbells, and firecrackers, etc. Do NOT bring in beach balls, silly string, or any item that would be deemed inappropriate. We ask that you request family and friends to remain seated throughout the ceremony, except when it is appropriate to stand (during the Pledge of Allegiance, for example), as a courtesy to other graduates and their families and friends. No one, other than graduates and designated guests, is permitted in the seating area for graduates.

TRAFFIC TO AND PARKING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA YUENGLING CENTER

Please be advised that the time of arrival for the graduation ceremony for students is 12:15 pm. Please plan appropriately when leaving your homes and give yourself more than enough time to arrive without incident. Once students and staff have left for the beginning of the ceremony, the students will not be permitted to enter the seating area for graduates. This is the University of South Florida's security policy and will be

strictly enforced. *There is a charge for parking, and it will be paid by credit card only on the day of the ceremony. There are parking areas throughout the area around the University of South Florida Yuengling Center.* Disabled parking is located at Gate A and Gate D, Parking Lot Area 22F.

SECURITY AND BAG POLICIES FOR USF

- No weapons of any kind, no outside food or beverage, no backpacks or other large bags.
- Personal bags must be smaller than 12"x12"x12". These are subject to search upon entry.
- All cameras are permitted, except professional cameras with larger lenses.

SEATING & TICKETS

Seating is unlimited in the USF Yuengling Center. Tickets will not be necessary as a result. **No one, other than graduates and designated guests, is permitted on the floor partitioned off in the event center.** Floor seating is only permitted for invited dignitaries, graduating seniors, band members, faculty and staff, and other invited guests. All of these people will have tickets in order to go to the floor and will be listed on pre-approved lists provided to the USF staff. No one else is permitted on the floor of the USF Yuengling Center. Those who need handicapped seating would be advised to enter at Gate A, where there are elevators available. There is handicapped seating available throughout the event center. There is also reserved seating for the hearing impaired. If you have a family member who requires a sign language interpreter, please notify Ms. Donlon at adonlon@pasco.k12.fl.us by March 27, 2026. You can also leave a message by calling the school at (727)774-7200. Upon entering the USF Yuengling Center, all people in attendance will be searched by security per USF policy.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Gigante Productions (813-907-1078) will photograph each senior individually upon receiving his/her diploma and congratulations from the principal, as well as with their diplomas. Purchase of these photographs is optional. Gigante Productions will notify seniors via mail when the pictures are ready, and all questions regarding these pictures should go to Gigante Productions. Please make sure that your address is correct with River Ridge High School, as that is the address that we will provide to Gigante Productions. River Ridge High School does not receive any of these pictures or information following graduation.

DIPLOMA DISTRIBUTION

Diplomas will be distributed alphabetically in the same way that students lined up in the USF Corral Area. ***Students who have officially checked out will be able to receive their diplomas and participate in graduation. Only students meeting the behavioral requirements at graduation will receive a diploma.***

After receiving your diploma, please exit the University of South Florida event center. We recommend having a pre-arranged meeting place set with your family.

Cap/Mortarboard Decorating Procedures and Etiquette

Please observe the following rules when decorating your graduation cap. Failure to follow these rules will result in a replacement cap being given to you during commencement for \$15.00.

- NO offensive language, sayings, nicknames, pictures, or lyrics on the cap
- NO objects such as signs, stuffed animals, bells, flowers, or any 3D object may rest on the cap
- ALL decorations MUST lie FLAT on the cap. Nothing can lie perpendicular, thus allowing us to see the decoration beyond eye level
- Your cap CANNOT make noise. NO bells, horns, or anything that makes noise
- NO political statements, logos, or names
- NO advertisements for business or organizations
- No hand drawings unless you have artistic ability beyond stick figures.

Utilize Google, Pinterest, etc., for ideas on cap decorating.

We **WILL NOT** furnish new caps if you mess up decorating! **WE HIGHLY SUGGEST YOU TRACE YOUR CAP ONTO CARDBOARD AND DECORATE THE CARDBOARD.** IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE, YOU **CAN START OVER WITH A NEW CARDBOARD.** After you decorate it, stick it to your cap with double-sided tape or Velcro stickers

Administration reserves the right to disallow anything that is not considered appropriate for the commencement ceremony. If you are unsure, ask someone (administrator, teacher, etc.) ahead of time!