



Commencement

DECEMBER 2025



Missouri School of Journalism
University of Missouri

PROGRAM

OPENING REMARKS

Lynda Kraxberger, associate dean for undergraduate studies

PLAYING OF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Maleigha Billings, senior, Strategic Communication

THOUGHTS OF THE CLASS OF 2025

Jake Aron, senior, Strategic Communication

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

Melissa Farlow, MA '94

KAPPA TAU ALPHA INITIATES

Jeannette Porter, assistant professor

GLOBAL PROGRAMS RECOGNITION

Fritz Cropp, associate dean

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES

Amy Simons, professor

■ GRADUATE STUDIES

Earnest Perry, associate dean

■ JOURNALISM PROFESSIONS

Mark Horvit, professor and chair

■ STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Jim Flink, professor and chair

REMARKS

David Kurpius, dean, Missouri School of Journalism

CONFERRAL OF DEGREES

Matthew Martens, provost, University of Missouri

PLAYING OF THE ALMA MATER

RECESSIONAL

When today's program draws to a close, we ask that guests remain seated. The platform party, faculty and students will recess down the aisle and out into the lobby. Once all the students have exited the auditorium, guests may begin exiting as well. Graduates may await guests in the lobby area.

DECEMBER 2025 DEGREE CANDIDATES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Damilola Obipeju Oduolowu ¹

MASTER OF ARTS

Ashley Marie Albers
David Angelo Caprara
le'shia Downton
Jiaxin Gong ¹
Jalyn Lenée Henderson
Jake James Hipsher
Dominique Michele Hodge
Linna Kong
Caleb McDairmant
Cassidy Reaka ¹
Colin Pershing Rhoads
Gabriel Elijah Sesmas
Kayla Simone Sydnor
Davon Emmanuel Taylor
William Edmund Wehmer ¹
Xu Xu

¹ Kappa Tau Alpha Initiate

² Summa Cum Laude

³ Magna Cum Laude

⁴ Cum Laude

⁵ Walter Williams Scholar

BACHELOR OF JOURNALISM

Xiaoman An ³
Sophie Elizabeth Ayers
Abram Barker
Casey Robert Bennett ⁴
Alexander Neil Buchanan
Madyson Carruth
Kate Cassady
Molly Maurene Fox ⁴
Rachel E. Goodbee ⁴
Hannah Leanne Graves
Katherine Elise Grawitch ^{1, 2}
Paige Madison Halter ^{1, 2, 5}
Brooke Nicole Hamann ⁴
Ava Kitzi ⁴
Ryan Joseph Baltazar Loomer ⁴
Allison Elizabeth Mahfood ³
Torryionna Le'Monica Miller
Olivia Lee Neumeier
Nam Huy Nguyen ^{3, 5}
Amber Isabella Roldan ⁴
Austin Zephryn Thomas ^{3, 5}
Makayla Voris ^{3, 5}
Blake Wallis

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Jacob Benjamin Aron ³
Ella Rae Berg ⁴
Maleigha Ava Billings ^{1, 2}
Madison Brueggenjohann ⁴
Kaley Caldwell ⁴
Alexis Laura Claey's
Amber Briana Clay
Pauline Ashley Clayton
Elise Connors
Kylie Morgan Daniel
Isabella Freeman
Addison Dawn Gish ^{4, 5}
Sydney Katherine Groff ⁴
Julia Rose Hasbrouck ³
Elaina Xin Ya Hogg ^{1, 2, 5}
Tess Elizabeth Howicz ⁴
Robert Claude Hummel III ^{1, 2}
Evan Theodore Kohn ⁴
Anthony Maiorca
Marin Grace McCullough ⁴
Kaihli Alexis Mitts ^{4, 5}
Grace Louise O'Connor
Lily Radil
James Reindl
Brianna Leigh Rodgers-Stemmler
Avery Roehler ^{4, 5}
Rebecca Rose ⁴
Raena Sinclair
Emma Stefanutti
Xiaoran Tang ³
Eldon Grayson Waters
Ellie Weien ^{2, 5}
Karissa Carolyn Wichmann ^{1, 2}
Kiersten Wise ⁴



MELISSA FARLOW
MA '94

ALUMNA SPEAKER

Melissa Farlow, MA '94, is a freelance photojournalist who has completed more than 20 National Geographic projects across Mexico, Europe, and North and South America. Known for her intimate portraits of people, she also focuses on landscapes and environmental issues. Her extensive travels in the American West photographing public lands—and her lifelong passion for horses—inspired *Wild at Heart*, a book about American mustangs.

Farlow's love of horses began in childhood in Indiana, where she famously wrote to Roy Rogers asking for his horse, Trigger. Her family eventually adopted an old, one-eyed cow pony that chewed tobacco and ate watermelon rinds.

She photographed in Africa for *Women in the Material World*, and her work appears in more than 70 books, including the *Day in the Life* series. National Geographic titles featuring her images include *Wild Lands of the West*, *Long Road South*, *The Photographs*, *Best 100 Wildlife Photographs*, and *Women Photographers at National Geographic*. Her photographs have also been published in *The Washington Post*, *LIFE*, *Smithsonian*, *GEO*, *Marie Claire*, *Sierra*, and *The Nature Conservancy*.

Farlow earned a Pulitzer Prize as part of the staff at the *Courier-Journal* and *The Louisville Times*. She also received a National Headliner Award and POYi portfolio honors while at the *Pittsburgh Press*. Indiana University named her a Distinguished Alumna, and she is a member of both the Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame and the Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame. She taught photojournalism at the University of Missouri, serves on the Missouri Photo Workshop faculty, and mentors through Vital Impacts, Girls Who Click, and The Photo Society.



**MALEIGHA
BILLINGS**

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The master of ceremonies will be Maleigha Billings. Originally from Kansas City, Missouri, Billings is earning a Bachelor of Journalism with an emphasis in strategic communication, and a minor in business. She served as an account manager for MOJO Ad, was active in Matchbook Marketing and the American Advertising Federation, and earned the Sharon K. Tiley Journalism Scholarship, recognizing high-achieving female strategic communication students. She is grateful to the journalism school faculty and staff for their guidance and support throughout her time at Mizzou.



JAKE ARON

STUDENT SPEAKER

Jake Aron will present the "Thoughts of the Class." Aron is earning a Bachelor of Journalism with an emphasis in strategic communication and a minor in entrepreneurship and innovation. Aron served as a public relations account manager of content at MOJO Ad, director of recruitment for Transfer Experience and Advising Mentors (TEAM) organization, and was a member of the Public Relations Student Society of America. He plans to pursue a career in public relations after graduation. Aron is appreciative of the opportunities and mentorship he received at the School of Journalism, which he knows has prepared him for his professional journey.