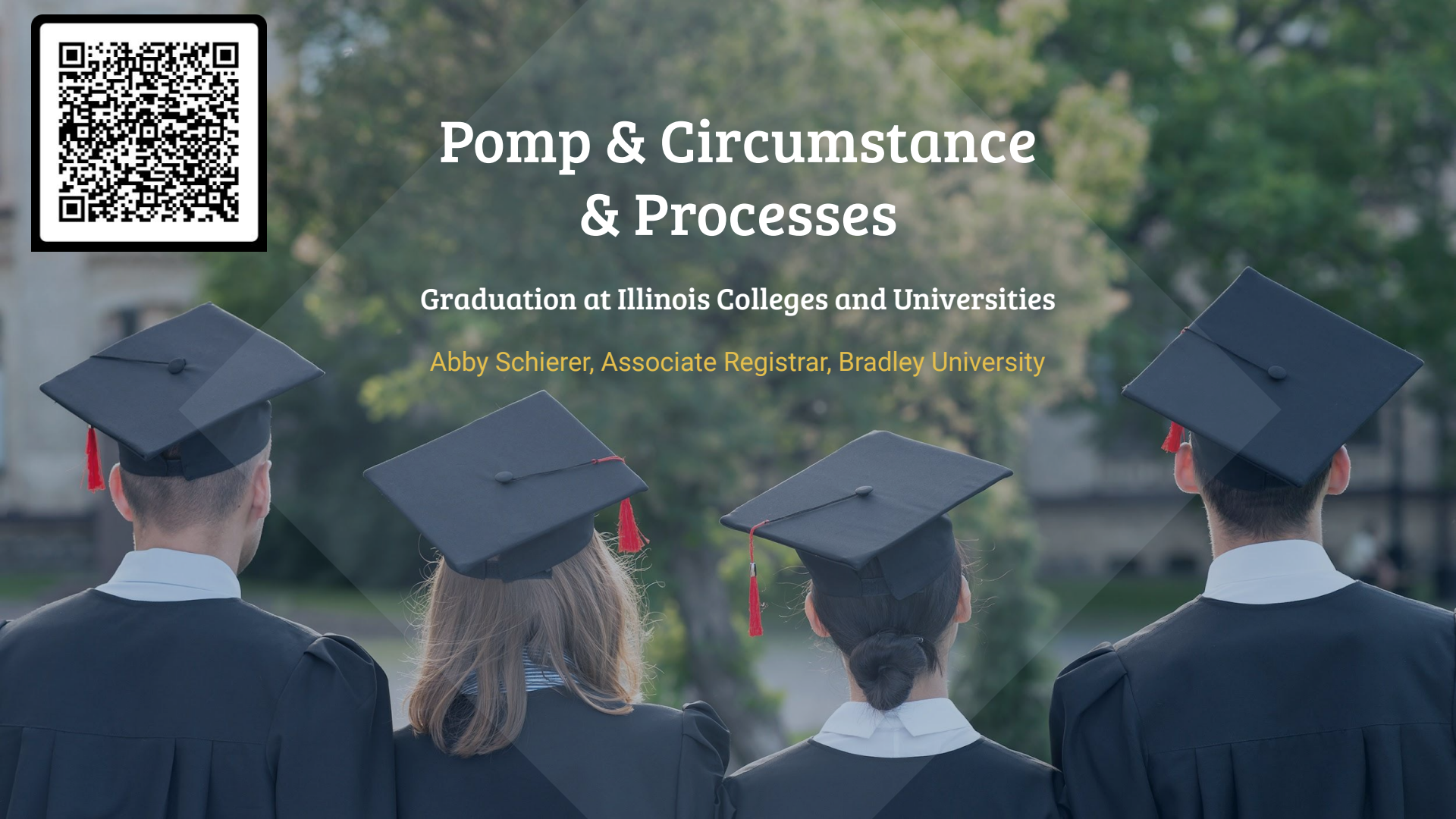
Pomp & Circumstance & Processes

Graduation at Illinois Colleges and Universities

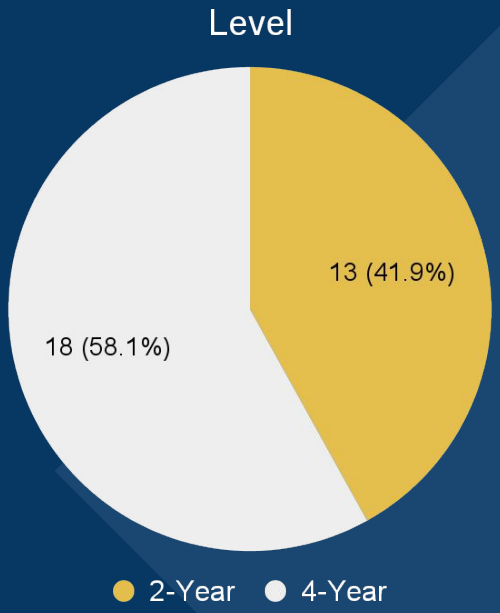
Abby Schierer, Associate Registrar, Bradley University

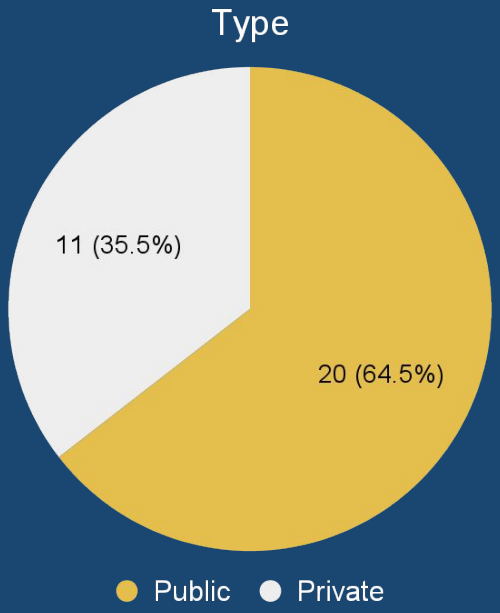


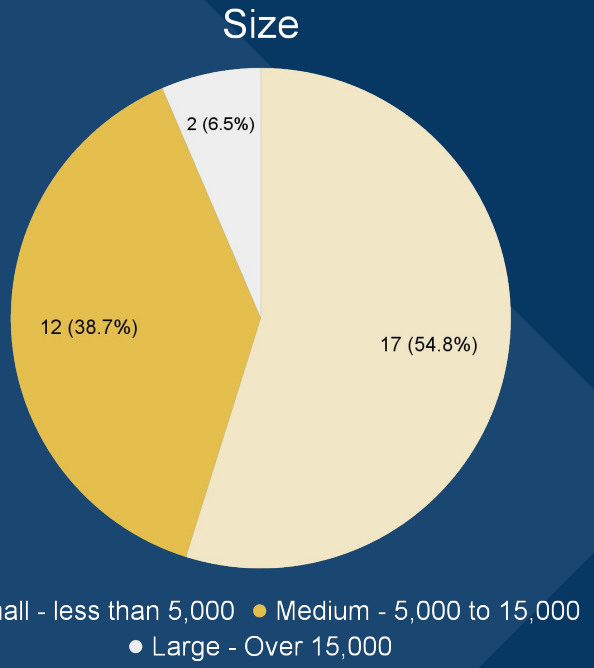
Survey Overview

- 17 Standard questions
- 4 Follow-up questions
- 1 Open ended question to share policies or procedures
- Distributed to all IACRAO members via the Listserv
- 36 Full responses representing 31 Institutions
- Follow-up research was done by reviewing policies and websites

Responding Institution Demographics







Applications and Fees

Only 2 institutions responded that they did not require an application to graduate, both of which are small private institutions.

13 Institutions or 42% of respondents charge a graduation fee.

- Majority of fees were $33-55
- 3 mentioned fees that vary based on the degree a student is earning
- 2 mentioned fees that increase after a deadline

When do you hold Ceremonies?

18

Institutions only offer a spring ceremony

13

Institutions offer ceremonies in the spring and in the fall

0

Institutions responded that they offer a summer ceremony

Ceremonies

Multiple Ceremonies

Broken down by college, degree level, program, etc.

15

One Ceremony for All

All graduates are honored in the same ceremony

12

Both a full ceremony and smaller ceremonies

4

Master's, Doctoral, and Certificate Programs

Masters and Doctoral

- 16 Institutions offer Masters and/or Doctoral Programs
  - 7 Hood all Masters/Doctoral Candidates at the ceremony
  - 5 Hood students outside of the commencement ceremony
  - 4 Hood only Doctoral Candidates at the ceremony

Certificates

- 24 Institutions offer Certificates
  - 14 allow certificate students to participate in the commencement ceremony
  - 10 do not include certificate completers in the commencement ceremony

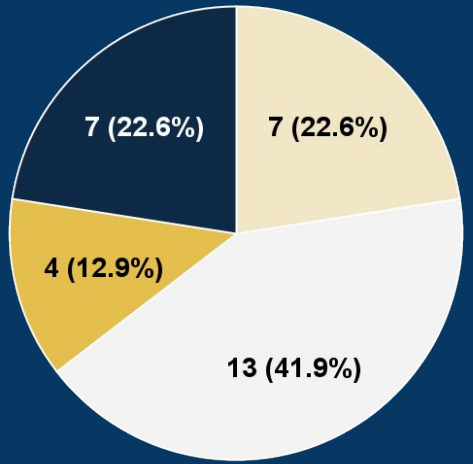
Walk Policies

- All respondents allow students to participate in a commencement ceremony before completing all degree requirements
- Best practices include
  - Students must submit a form
  - Students must be within a certain number of credits of completing their degree. Two or fewer remaining requirements is a common benchmark.
  - Students must show proof of enrollment in final credits needed

Regalia

- 22 Institutions have student order their own caps and gowns vs. 9 institutions that order and distribute caps and gowns to students
- 9 Institutions have policies discouraging unauthorized accessories

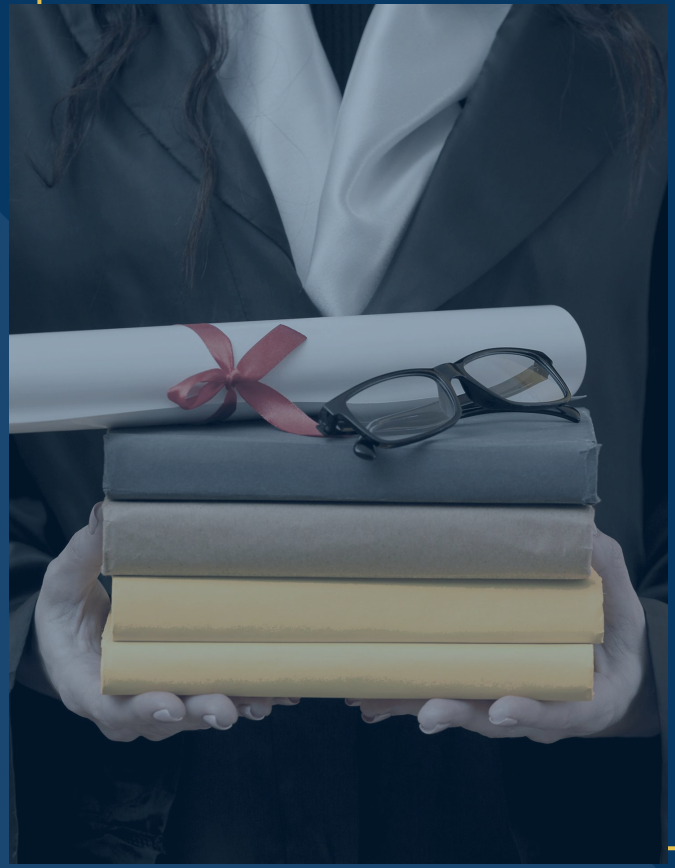
How is Cap and Gown Cost Covered?

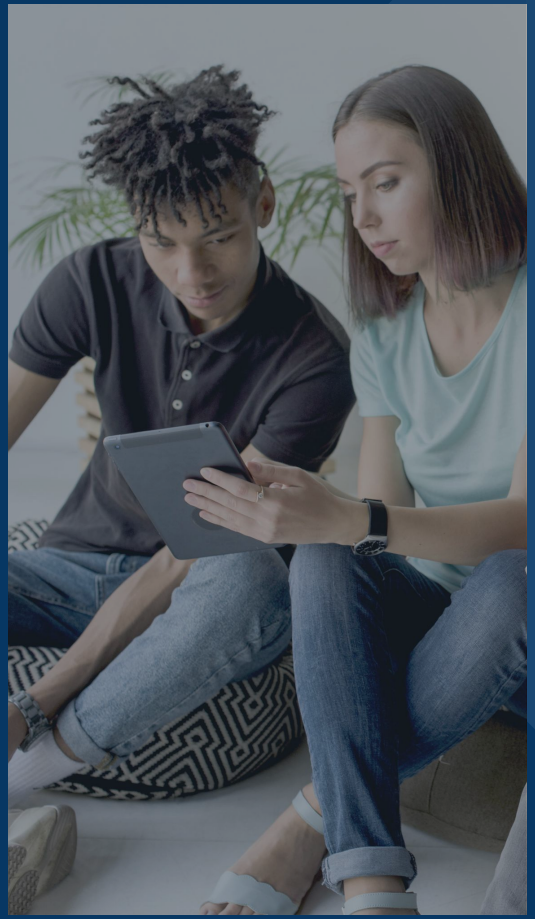


Only 2 institutions distribute diplomas at their ceremonies

Posthumous Degrees

- 16 Institutions have a posthumous degree policy
- Best practices include:
  - Written request by a family member or University representative
  - Completion of a minimum amount of credit hours, class standing, etc.
  - Student was in good standing academically and judicially
  - Student is included in Commencement program
  - Diploma is issued to the student's family
  - Alternate certificate for students who do not meet all of the requirements for a posthumous degree





Follow Up Questions and Topics of Discussion

Names

Do you allow preferred names on diplomas?
Do you allow students to be announced by a preferred name?
How do you ensure correct pronunciation at the ceremony?

Commencement

Are students required to participate in the ceremony?
Do you provide a digital program, printed program, or both?
Are students allowed a certain number of guests? Do you require tickets?
How are students seated/processed?
Do you award honorary degrees? How are the recipients chosen?

Diplomas

Do you include majors, minors, and/or concentrations on diplomas?
Do you print in-house or have a diploma vendor?
Do you offer or are you considering offering electronic diplomas?

Challenges

Student Expectations

- Students expecting more
- Students wanting to earn their degree in December but participate in the May ceremony
- Students thinking the ceremony equates to degree completion
- Calculation of Latin Honors (or similar) for the ceremony

Ceremony Logistics

- Location: Size, parking, accessibility
- Timing: Fitting multiple ceremonies in one day, ceremonies across multiple days
- Reader Cards
- Catching students who are not cleared to participate

Thanks!

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