Students grieve fall commencements

By Victoria Cruz
Contributor



PHOTO | SCSU JOURNALISM WEBSITE

Class of '15 graduates who received a fall commencement.

Prior to 2016, fall and summer graduates walked the stage in a fall commencement.

Students must now wait until the spring for the annual ceremony. This is a change that many current students remain unaware of.

"The last fall commencement was held in December 2016, which predates my time in the Registrar's Office. It has been an annual ceremony since then," Alicia Carroll of the Registrar's Office said.

While degrees are still conferred at the end of fall, winter, spring and summer terms, students who do graduate in the off-season do not have a formal ceremony to celebrate the achievement until the following spring.

Diplomas are simply issued electronically at the conclusion of the term one to two weeks upon completion and physical degrees are mailed shortly after.

For many, the knowledge that the university used to do fall commencements came as a surprise.

"I was unaware that the university did fall graduation ceremonies," Rylee Massoni a current graduate student said. "This change, however, will not affect me or my graduation plans personally. I do not feel students were adequately informed; I never recall hearing about it."

Many students who finish in the fall or summer do not have the opportunity to experience a traditional celebration.

This is also due to addtional factors, including the majority of these students moving away or starting jobs soon after graduation.

This delay causes many logistical issues for students who wish to participate in the celebration months later in the spring.

This decision leaves certain students with an inability to celebrate their achievements proudly As a result, students end up taking a quiet exit.

A graduation ceremony serves as a milestone to celebrate years of hard work. Budget constraints, low attendance and various logistical challenges are likely to have played a role in this decision.

But an official statement regarding the ongoing matter has not been made public.

"I feel bad for students graduating in the fall if they must wait until spring to receive their degree," Massoni said

Fall commencement is not likely to be reinstated anytime soon. While the university does provide necessary transcripts and diplomas to graduates for students finishing in any term, commencement remains a once a year event.

With graduation being a pivotal moment in the academic journey, the question remains: should the university revisit the idea of bringing back a fall commencement ceremony?

For students who work just as hard, meet every requirement and finish strong in December, the lack of recognition in real time feels like a lost tradition—one that may be worth reclaiming.

For any student who is approaching graduation, it is important to plan accordingly and know that while degrees are conferred year-round, commencement only happens once a year.

No spring concert

Continued from Page 1

"Although schools like UConn pay far more tuition than us, it's still frustrating knowing that other schools, like UConn, still hosts these kinds of concerts annually," Pedro said. "Because it raises the question: Why can they prioritize student engagement while we can't?"

Pedro also continues to explain that the situation feels even more disheartening because of the overwhelming amount of money students pay to attend the university.

"As students, we're paying more than just tuition — our fees also go toward campus life, student organizations and activities that are supposed to enrich our college experience. So, when these events disappear, it feels like part of what we're paying for is being quietly taken away," Pedro said.

While she understands that budgets are tight and funding is being cut, she believes these reductions have a larger impact on the school's sense of community.

"The impact of that goes deeper than just missing a concert — it chips away at school spirit, connection and our overall sense of belonging on campus," Pedro said.

Pedro also emphasized that this lack of events raises important questions about how student fees are being allocated.

"It would be great to see more transparency from the administration about how student fees are being used and perhaps more importantly, a stronger commitment to preserving the things that make college feel like a community — not just a degree factory," Pedro said.

Pedro continued to stress that the university should prioritize creating larger events that can enhance a student's college experience.

"We're here to learn, but we're also here to grow, connect and make memories. And events like the spring concert are a big part of that," Pedro said.

Dian Brown-Albert steps into her new role

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

Over the past school year, many students have noticed a shift in the Multicultural Center. Former Director of MCC, Dian Brown-Albert, has stepped into her new role as director of student academic and curricular initiatives.

After nearly two decades leading MCC, where she fostered student success and drove transformative programs, she now brings her wealth of knowledge and passion to shaping innovative academic strategies at the university.

"During that time, I dedicated my heart and soul to supporting our students, faculty, staff and to creating meaningful events that brought our campus community together," Brown-Albert said.

Brown-Albert explained that her previous role was deeply focused on direct student engagement, where she was actively involved in programming, mentoring and advocating for students.

"It was more sitting at the table where you make an impact and support students of color," Brown-Albert said.

She adds that her new position allows her to support students in a different way.

"It's totally different from my past role," Brown-Albert said. "I'm now looking at a lot of data to help students and enhance their success."

She described her new position as more behind the scenes, with a strong emphasis on collaboration and teamwork with staff.

"I get the opportunity to connect with faculty across different departments to help support students," Brown-Albert said.

This shift allows her to focus on fostering partnerships across various departments, in order to enhance both the academic experience and student success.

Subsequently, Brown-Albert said her overarching goal is understanding the retention and graduation rate of students.

She plans to achieve this by analyzing data to uncover trends and challenges.

"Looking at what are the top lowest courses that students aren't doing so well in," Brown-Albert said. "And then looking at the faculty as the experts to see what they think are the issues that are impacting student success."

Brown-Albert said trends could be that multiple students that come from certain high schools often face more challenges in math courses.

After analyzing this data, Brown-Albert said her main goal is to find innovative ways to support students.

"It's looking at how can we prepare them better before they come here?" Brown-Albert said.

Her transition highlights a continued dedication to empowering students and creating dynamic learning environments that pave the way for academic growth and achievement.

Brown-Albert said that as she watches the MCC grow and develop, students come and visit her, as the bonds she has formed with students remain strong.

"I'm walking in the hallway and I hear 'Miss. Dian,'" Brown-Albert said. "It's nice to see a smile on a student's face and hear them just keep me up to date with what they're doing."

These visits are a testament to the connections she has made with students and the lasting impact of her mentorship.

"You are a mentor in that role and to some students I'll always be that mentor," Brown-Albert said.

Along with students she also said that she has had postitve interactions with staff as well.

As Brown-Albert adjusts to her new role, she said she is looking forward to creating more connections with faculty.

"I am excited about the opportunity to forge new connections and make a positive impact in fresh ways," Brown-Albert said.

Brown-Albert, who took on her new role in July, said that she is excited for this new chapter.

She also said she plans to continue to contribute to the growth and success of the institution.

"It's still a brand-new position and no one has held it before," Brown-Albert said. "So I'm taking it one step at a time."



PHOTOS | BRIANNA WALLEN

Dian Brown-Albert, director of student academic and curricular initiatives, in her office at Engleman Hall on April 2.

The Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department in Engleman Hall on April 7.