

## Letter Regarding Graduation

Dear Fr. Malloy,

Over the past year, members of student government have examined Notre Dame's graduation experience. After seeking advice from students, faculty, and college administrators, we believe that there are certain changes that could be made to enhance the current program. Recently, we discussed many aspects of commencement weekend with college deans, and one suggestion that we truly believe would improve graduation would be to hold the commencement ceremony outdoors.

In our research, we thoroughly <sup>investigated</sup> researched graduation procedures at other peer institutions. These schools, many of which were also located in unpredictable climates, held commencement ceremonies outdoors. In fact, of the twenty-two schools that were researched, *all* of them held some form of outdoor ceremonies and found this setting appropriate.

Another reason we strongly support moving the graduation ceremony outside is to improve the experience that commencement weekend offers to family members of Notre Dame graduates. There is no doubt that family is a central aspect of Notre Dame. However, very few family members are able to share in this very special experience. Because of space limitations, people who travel great distances are removed from this once-in-a-lifetime event and must resort to watching their beloved graduate on television.

Our campus has an aura of its own, and its role in the overall experience for students is essential. Notre Dame benefits from a wholly integrated campus, in which students live, study, dine, pray, cheer, and serve without ever <sup>having to leave</sup> leaving its boundaries. There is no more appropriate way to celebrate the achievements that occurred over four years in this setting than to hold a ceremony surrounded by the environment that is Notre Dame.

While the logistics of such a change are daunting, there is no doubt that holding an outdoor ceremony would be in the best interest of Notre Dame students and their families. Many venues for an outdoor ceremony exist, including those that are already utilized for large outdoor events. Since inclement weather is always a possibility, the current JACC plan and ticket policy could be used as a backup. Thus, in the likely case of decent weather all family members would be guaranteed attendance at the ceremony.

While we certainly recognize that moving the ceremony outside would be a big change, we write to ask you to consider this improvement. By doing so, we believe that Notre Dame will then be able to offer a <sup>more</sup> rewarding graduation weekend to all members of the Notre Dame family. We would like to take this opportunity to initiate a discussion regarding this very meaningful change.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Student Union Senate

in conjunction with

Kim Anderson and Allison Vater  
Office of the Student Body President

