On Campus

20 Photos that Capture Columbia’s 2026 Commencement

On May 20, more than 18,000 Columbians capped off their studies and made the transition from students to graduates.

By
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|
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Brandon Vallejo

Despite temperatures in the nineties, thousands of graduates, faculty, and guests flocked to the Morningside Heights campus for a day of remarks and celebration.



Lucas Hoeffel



Sirin Samman

Graduates were easy to spot as they made their way to the big event on the 1 train.



Diane Bondareff

This year’s roster of honorary degree recipients included some high-profile faces: Michael Novak ’09GS, ’26HON, artistic director of the Paul Taylor Dance Company; news anchor and political commentator George Stephanopoulos ’82CC, ’26HON; actress and producer Amanda Peet ’94CC, ’26HON; and musician Jon Batiste ’26HON.



Diane Bondareff

Jon Batiste ’26HON — the recipient of eight Grammys, an Oscar, a Golden Globe, a BAFTA, and now an honorary Columbia degree — treated the Class of 2026 to a surprise performance.



Diane Bondareff

Fellow Columbia College alumni George Stephanopoulos ’82CC, ’26HON and Amanda Peet ’94CC, ’26HON caught up inside Low Library.



Jin Park (Eileen Barroso) and Sarafina Belafonte (Diane Bondareff)

In the morning ceremony for Columbia’s graduate schools, MPA grad Jin Park ’26SIPA sang the National Anthem, and in the afternoon event for undergrads, Sarafina Belafonte ’26CC, a Columbia neuroscience major and the granddaughter of singer Harry Belafonte, proved that vocal chops run in the family.



Sirin Samman

The Metrotones, one of several campus a capella groups, also took the stage for a spirited performance.



Brandon Vallejo

Friends and family were welcome at the big event — including those with four legs and a tail.



Sirin Samman

Roar-ee found a pride of lions to hang with.

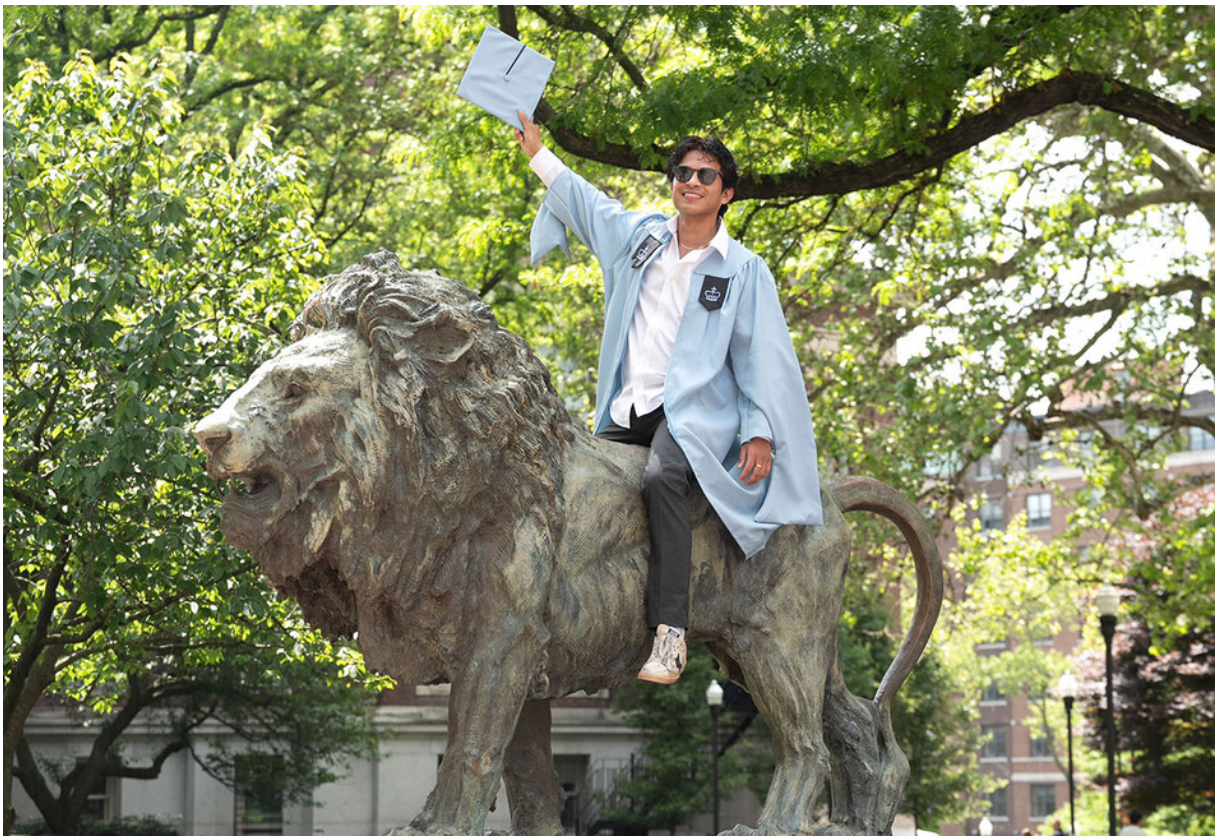


Steve Myaskovsky

…While stopping for countless photo ops.



Sirin Samman


Steve Myaskovsky

Some grads posed with — or even *on* — the OG Roar-ee (climbing campus sculptures is not recommended).



Lucas Hoeffel



Chris Taggart

…While others took advantage of the Instagrammable backdrops placed around campus just for Commencement.



Brandon Vallejo

Graduates of Columbia’s College of Dental Medicine showed off their smiles with a giant toothbrush.



Lucas Hoeffel

And the international alumni of Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs continued the annual tradition of waving their home-country flags. This year, 140 nations were represented in the Class of 2026 across the University.



Sirin Samman

Some caps were decorated with optimistic messages.



Lucas Hoeffel

…And others were tossed into the air to mark a new beginning.

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