

Commencement Collection, 1869 - present (bulk 1891 - present)

Collection number: TCNJ005

Collection title: Commencement Collection

Dates: 1869-present, bulk 1891-present

Creator/Collector: TCNJ

Extent: 4 linear feet (7 boxes: 1 book box and 6 document boxes)

Repository: Archives and Special Collections, R. Barbara Gitenstein Library, The College of New Jersey, PO Box 7718, Ewing, NJ 08628-0718

Abstract: The Commencement Collection contains ephemera pertaining to Commencement and related graduation events including two scrapbooks of invitations, commencement programs, and graduating class activities from the Normal School years in the late 1800s through early 1930s. The collection spans from 1869 through the present.

Language(s): English

Accession number: 2020.03

Acquisition information: The bulk of the materials came from interdepartmental transfers and intentional collection by librarians, with the following exceptions: the 1870 Commencement speech was a gift of Mrs. Ralph Prall in 1956; 1884 Commencement program was a gift of Elizabeth "Lizzie" Oliphant (her graduation) on May 24, 1956; 1888 Commencement program was a gift of Irene Medaugh (her father was class of 1888, she was class of 1931) on April 7, 1978; 1924 Commencement program was gift of Dr. J. Harrison Morson in 2002; 1930 Commencement program was a gift of Judy Schreiber on August 5, 2021.

Accruals: Commencement materials up to 2023 were added to the legacy Commencement and Baccalaureate Programs Collection in February 2024. Annual acquisitions are anticipated.

Processing information: The legacy collection "Commencement and Baccalaureate Programs" was processed in the early 2000s. The collection was re-processed in February 2024 to include additional Commencement related materials up to 2023. This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services IMLS grant number ST-252518-OMS-22.

Condition/conservation notes: Many of the programs in the 1908-1932 scrapbook were at one time pasted into a notebook. The notebook has been disassembled but the back pages may not be accessible. The c.1873-1921 scrapbook has detached covers, loose pages in the front, and is generally very brittle. Some of the programs have leather or textile binding, or

decorative elements that have become brittle, discolored, or have transferred dye or acid to surrounding surfaces. One 1924 program has significant red rot. Several programs have been laminated and hole punched for storage in a ring binder.

Access restrictions: This collection is open for research.

Physical access restrictions: The items in this collection may be used by patrons who abide by the Archives and Special Collections Use Policy of the R. Barbara Gitenstein Library at TCNJ.

Technical access restrictions: Portions of the collection have been digitized and are available for viewing in the library on a provided computer, or on:
<https://atom.tcnj.edu/index.php/Commencement-Collection>

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Preferred citation: TCNJ005 Commencement Collection, The College of New Jersey, R. Barbara Gitenstein Library: Archives and Special Collections.

Related collections: 002 Clara Wolverton; 006 Mildred Duncan Warnecke

Separated material: none

Published descriptions: <https://atom.tcnj.edu/index.php/Commencement-Collection>

Location of originals: Room 410, Archives and Special Collections, Gitenstein Library, TCNJ

Publication note: [publication info from TCNJ Mag, etc.]

Biographical or Organizational History:

The College of New Jersey's academic tradition reaches back to 1855 when it was established by the state legislature as the New Jersey State Normal School. It was the first state-established teacher training school in the state and the ninth in the nation. Governor Rodman Price promoted the idea of a training institute for New Jersey's teachers and mobilized support among influential state leaders. Located on Clinton Avenue in Trenton from 1855 until the early 1930s, the Normal School flourished in the latter 1800s, expanding both its academic offerings and physical facilities. In 1925, the first four-year baccalaureate degree program was established. This change marked the beginning of TCNJ's transition from a normal school to a teachers' college and was accompanied by a change in physical surroundings. In 1928, a beautiful 210-

acre tract of land in Ewing Township, then known as Hillwood Lakes, was purchased as a new site for the College.

The first Commencement ceremony was held in 1858. The early ceremonies were held outside of the school, including at Masonic Hall and later, at the Taylor Opera House in Trenton around the early 1870s. Indoor graduation ceremonies began on campus after a new building with an auditorium was built at the Normal School in the 1890s. Since the move to Hillwood Lakes, Commencement ceremonies have been held in various locations indoors and out, throughout the campus. Many years saw more than one Commencement or graduation ceremony – generally one in January or February, another in May or June, and occasionally one in August.

The Model School served as a training school for Normal School student teachers from 1856 through 1917. Primary through high school students attended the Model School. Some of its alumni also attended and received degrees from the Normal School. It had a separate Commencement ceremony during the same week as the Normal School, and often shared a Baccalaureate service.

Commencement exercises consisted primarily of invocations, class speakers, essay presentations, honorary speakers, and the awarding of degrees. Baccalaureate exercises occurred shortly before or after the commencements and consisted of hymns, prayers, and addresses. The Model School and Normal School shared the same Baccalaureate program. Baccalaureate services included religious elements and occurred on a Sunday. Separate Baccalaureate services were either merged with the commencement exercises or discontinued altogether by the late 1960s.

Graduating seniors from both the Model and Normal Schools also participated in “Class Day” or “Class Week” exercises, which included a variety of activities such as outings, performances, dances, and other social events. A similar tradition has continued frequently up to the present time with variations of “Senior Week.”

Scope and Content notes:

This collection documents the ceremonies and related events of Commencement and/or graduation exercises at The College of New Jersey spanning 1858 to the present day.

The collection includes the following materials:

Commencement invitations - These are formal printed invitations that may include a student's calling card or handwritten details during the Normal School years, as well as commercially printed invitations used to date, c. 1869-2005 (bulk c. 1869-1920, 1977-2005).

Class Day and/or week programs - These are often beautifully printed and bound with cord and tassels, which likely served as a keepsake for students of the Normal and Model Schools. They list the schedule of activities for a graduating class during a day or over the span of a week. In some cases, they also include the Commencement program (c. 1894-1924).

The Normal and Model Schools classes of 1917 did not have a Class Day, but instead participated in Red Cross activities supporting World War I. The Model School as a K-12 school ended after the class of 1917, when it became “The Training School” offering only the

elementary grades. In the 1930s, official Class Day or Week activities were replaced by less formal "Senior Week" activities, which continued off and on over the decades. Search *The Signal* newspaper for more information <https://dr.tcnj.edu/handle/2900/275>

Commencement tickets - These are admission tickets to the Normal or Model School Commencement ceremonies, usually at Taylor Opera House, c.1873-1901.

Commencement programs - These are printed programs of the Commencement ceremony, often containing the names of all graduating students. During the Normal School years, some have various embossed and/or multicolor illustrations of the school, insignia, or decorative lettering. Later programs have fewer design elements. The collection is mostly complete after 1891 with the exception of 2000, c. 1883-2023.

Promotion Exercises programs - These were for the Grammar A Class of the Model School, which held a graduation-style ceremony, c. 1909-1917.

Class and school songs - These are separate printed pages of songs to be sung during Commencement and other graduation events, usually containing a unique song for the graduating class and other school anthems and/or alma mater, c. 1899-1901.

Baccalaureate programs - These were printed as separate programs c. 1934-1964, but during the Normal School years, information about the Baccalaureate service was listed in the Class Day/Week or Commencement programs.

Programs for departmental, diploma, or other special graduation ceremonies - These are programs for Commencement events held outside of the main ceremony, often for graduate students or special groups, c. 1967; c. 2016-2023.

Original speeches - There are two handwritten speeches: "I Have Wandered in my Dreams," is a Commencement speech from 1870 whose author is unknown. The Annual Report for that year lists Mary F. Chadwick and Rosalie A. Collins as presenters of "honorary essays," and Katie L. Wilson was valedictorian. And "The Child's Ability to Reason" was a valedictory essay written by Ira Collins, but read by O. Watson Flavelle, due to Collins' ill health at June 1899 Commencement.

Graduation or Commencement Bulletins - These are newsletters that contain information and schedule of events around the Commencement ceremony. c. 1969-1999

Graduation Convocation program - During some years, the college held an August graduation combined with the annual Convocation ceremony. These programs document those ceremonies, c. 1960-1967.

Scrapbooks - There are two scrapbooks in this series: The older scrapbook (c. 1873-1921) contains ephemera related to Commencement such as invitations, tickets, and programs for Senior class activities and the Commencement ceremony from the era of the Normal School.

In the 1908-1932 scrapbook, many of the Commencement programs only have the page with the events of the day and do not have the cover and/or a page listing the graduate's names. Starting in 1918, some of them have the page with graduates' names, but they were at one time pasted into a notebook that has since been disassembled but the back pages of the brochures may not be accessible and/or readable.

Organization and arrangement:

The collection contains two series: Commencement Scrapbooks and Annual Commencement Materials. Series I contains two scrapbooks of Commencement programs and related materials of overlapping years ranging from c.1873 to 1932 that are arranged mostly chronologically. Series II comprises materials for each year of Commencement, arranged in chronological order.

Subject headings:

Corporate Names:

- New Jersey State Normal School (Trenton, N.J.)
- State Teachers College and State Normal School at Trenton (N.J.)
- Trenton State College
- College of New Jersey (Ewing, N.J.)

Genres:

- Ephemera
- Programs (Publication)
- Scrapbooks

Locations:

- Trenton (N.J.)
- Ewing (N.J.)

Other Subjects:

- College students
- Commencement ceremonies
- State universities and colleges
- Teachers colleges

Container list

Series I - Commencement Scrapbooks			
Box 1	Folder 1	Scrapbook of Commencement invitations, tickets, programs, and Class Day and/or Week exercises for Normal and Model Schools	c.1873-1921 (bulk 1891-1921)
Box 2	Folder 1	Scrapbook of Normal School and Model School Commencement, Baccalaureate, and performing arts event programs	1908-1932
Series II - Annual Commencement Materials			

Box 2	Folder 2	Normal School blank Commencement invitation and envelope	c. mid-late 1800s
Box 2	Folder 3	Normal School Commencement invitation from Lucy Vail, June 1869	1869
Box 2	Folder 4	Commencement speech "I Have Wandered in my Dreams," gift of Mrs. Ralph Prall	1870
Box 2	Folder 5	Normal School Commencement program and newspaper clipping about Normal and Model Commencements	1875
Box 2	Folder 6	Normal School Commencement program, and newspaper clipping about Normal and Model Commencements	1876
Box 2	Folder 7	Newspaper clipping about Normal School Commencement	1877
Box 2	Folder 8	Newspaper clippings about Normal School Commencement and valedictory poem	1878
Box 2	Folder 9	Model School Commencement program, gift of Elizabeth Chambers Oliphant	1884
Box 2	Folder 10	Normal School Commencement program and newspaper clipping about Model School Commencement	1888
Box 2	Folder 11	Normal School Commencement program, gift of Lillian Jackson Tassini	1891
Box 2	Folder 12	Normal School Class Day program	1894
Box 2	Folder 13	Model School Class Day program, Class Day Address, and Commencement program	1896
Box 2	Folder 14	Normal School January Commencement ticket and program and Normal School June Commencement program	1897
Box 2	Folder 15	Normal School January and June Commencement programs	1898
Box 2	Folder 16	Valedictory essay by Ira Collins "The Child's Ability to Reason," read by O. Watson Flavelle at June 1899 Commencement and Normal School class of '99 songs	1899
Box 2	Folder 17	Normal School and Model School Class Day programs	1900
Box 2	Folder 18	Normal School February Commencement program, Normal School June Baccalaureate ticket, June Commencement program, and class songs	1901
Box 2	Folder 19	Normal School June Commencement invitation, Elsie Hampton card, and Class Day program	1903
Box 2	Folder 20	Normal School Class Day program	1905

Box 2	Folder 21	Normal School June Commencement invitation, Class Day program, and Commencement program	1908
Box 2	Folder 22	Model School Class Day program	1909
Box 2	Folder 23	Normal School Class Day program and Commencement invitation	1912
Box 2	Folder 24	Normal School Class Day programs	1913
Box 2	Folder 25	Normal School Class Day program	1915
Box 2	Folder 26	Normal School June Commencement program	1916
Box 2	Folder 27	February Commencement newspaper clipping and June Commencement program	1918
Box 2	Folder 28	June Commencement program	1919
Box 2	Folder 29	January Commencement invitation and June Commencement program	1920
Box 2	Folder 30	June Commencement programs	1921
Box 2	Folder 31	June Commencement newspaper clipping	1922
Box 2	Folder 32	February Commencement newspaper clipping	1923
Box 2	Folder 33	Partial February Commencement program and June Commencement/Class Week programs	1924
Box 2	Folder 34	June Commencement program	1925
Box 2	Folder 35	January Commencement program and June Commencement program	1927
Box 2	Folder 36	January Commencement program and June Commencement program, reprint	1928
Box 2	Folder 37	January Commencement program and June Commencement programs	1930
Box 2	Folder 38	January Commencement program and June Commencement announcement and programs	1931
Box 2	Folder 39	June Commencement programs	1932
Box 2	Folder 40	June Commencement program	1933
Box 2	Folder 41	June Baccalaureate service program	1934
Box 2	Folder 42	June Commencement programs	1935
Box 3	Folder 1	June Baccalaureate service program and Commencement program	1936
Box 3	Folder 2	June Commencement programs	1937

Box 3	Folder 3	June Baccalaureate service program and Commencement program	1938
Box 3	Folder 4	June Commencement program	1939
Box 3	Folder 5	June Commencement programs	1940
Box 3	Folder 6	Baccalaureate service program and June Commencement programs	1941
Box 3	Folder 7	Baccalaureate service program and May Commencement program	1942
Box 3	Folder 8	January Commencement program and August Commencement program	1943
Box 3	Folder 9	January Commencement program and May Senior Music Recital and Commencement program	1944
Box 3	Folder 10	January Commencement program, May Senior Music Recital and Commencement programs, and August Commencement program	1945
Box 3	Folder 11	June Commencement program	1946
Box 3	Folder 12	February Commencement program and June Commencement program	1947
Box 3	Folder 13	January Commencement program and June Commencement programs	1948
Box 3	Folder 14	June Commencement program	1949
Box 3	Folder 15	Baccalaureate service program and June Commencement programs	1950
Box 3	Folder 16	June Baccalaureate and Commencement Bulletin, Baccalaureate service program, Commencement schedule, Commencement programs, and newspaper clipping	1951
Box 3	Folder 17	June Baccalaureate service program, Commencement programs, and newspaper clipping	1952
Box 3	Folder 18	June Baccalaureate service program, Commencement programs, and newspaper clipping	1953
Box 3	Folder 19	June Baccalaureate service program, Commencement programs, and newspaper clipping	1954
Box 3	Folder 20	June Commencement programs and newspaper clipping	1955
Box 3	Folder 21	June Commencement programs	1956
Box 3	Folder 22	Baccalaureate Service program, June Commencement programs, and newspaper clippings	1957

Box 3	Folder 23	June Baccalaureate service program, June Commencement programs, August Commencement program sheet, and newspaper clipping	1958
Box 3	Folder 24	June Commencement programs and newspaper clippings	1959
Box 3	Folder 25	Baccalaureate service program, June Commencement programs, August Graduation Convocation program, and newspaper clippings	1960
Box 3	Folder 26	Baccalaureate program, June Commencement programs, and August Graduation Convocation program	1961
Box 3	Folder 27	Baccalaureate programs, June Commencement programs, and August Graduation Convocation program	1962
Box 3	Folder 28	February Mid Year Graduation program, June Commencement program, and August Graduation Convocation program	1963
Box 3	Folder 29	February Mid Year Graduation program, Baccalaureate programs, June Commencement programs, and August Graduation Convocation program	1964
Box 3	Folder 30	June Senior Convocation program, June Commencement programs, and August Graduation Convocation Program	1965
Box 3	Folder 31	June Commencement programs, Commencement speaker's cue card, and August Graduation Convocation program	1966
Box 3	Folder 32	June Commencement programs, Commencement program for Social Studies Department, and August Graduation Convocation program	1967
Box 3	Folder 33	June Commencement program	1968
Box 3	Folder 34	June Commencement programs and May and June Commencement Bulletins	1969
Box 3	Folder 35	Commencement programs	1970
Box 4	Folder 1	Commencement programs	1971
Box 4	Folder 2	Commencement Bulletin and Commencement programs	1972
Box 4	Folder 3	Commencement Bulletins and Commencement programs	1973

Box 4	Folder 4	Commencement Bulletin and Commencement programs	1974
Box 4	Folder 5	Commencement Bulletin and Commencement programs	1975
Box 4	Folder 6	Commencement Bulletin, Commencement programs, and Commencement music and speeches "In Words, In Music"	1976
Box 4	Folder 7	Commencement invitation, Commencement Bulletin, and Commencement programs	1977
Box 4	Folder 8	Commencement programs	1978
Box 4	Folder 9	Commencement programs	1979
Box 4	Folder 10	Commencement programs	1980
Box 4	Folder 11	Commencement programs	1981
Box 4	Folder 12	Commencement programs	1982
Box 4	Folder 13	Commencement programs	1983
Box 4	Folder 14	Commencement Bulletins and Commencement programs	1984
Box 4	Folder 15	Commencement Bulletin and Commencement programs	1985
Box 5	Folder 1	Commencement Bulletin, and Commencement programs	1986
Box 5	Folder 2	Commencement Bulletins and Commencement programs	1987
Box 5	Folder 3	Commencement invitation, Commencement Bulletins , Commencement programs, and Graduate Diploma Awarding Ceremony, School of Education, program	1988
Box 5	Folder 4	Commencement programs	1989
Box 5	Folder 5	Commencement invitation, Commencement Bulletins, and Commencement programs	1990
Box 5	Folder 6	Commencement programs, School of Business Commencement program, and speaker's notes	1991
Box 5	Folder 7	Commencement programs	1992
Box 5	Folder 8	Commencement invitation, Commencement Bulletins, and Commencement programs	1993
Box 5	Folder 9	Commencement programs	1994

Box 5	Folder 10	Commencement programs	1995
Box 5	Folder 11	Commencement programs	1996
Box 5	Folder 12	Commencement program	1997
Box 5	Folder 13	Commencement Bulletin and Commencement program	1998
Box 5	Folder 14	Commencement Bulletins and Commencement program	1999
Box 5	Folder 15	Placeholder for program not yet acquired	2000
Box 5	Folder 16	Commencement programs	2001
Box 5	Folder 17	Commencement programs	2002
Box 5	Folder 18	Commencement program	2003
Box 5	Folder 19	Commencement programs	2004
Box 6	Folder 1	Commencement invitations, Commencement programs, and Department ceremony locations card	2005
Box 6	Folder 2	Commencement programs	2006
Box 6	Folder 3	Commencement programs	2007
Box 6	Folder 4	Commencement programs	2008
Box 6	Folder 5	Commencement programs	2009
Box 6	Folder 6	Commencement programs	2010
Box 6	Folder 7	Commencement programs	2011
Box 6	Folder 8	Commencement programs	2012
Box 6	Folder 9	Commencement programs	2013
Box 6	Folder 10	Senior Week postcards, Commencement schedule of events for May 15 and 16, Commencement schedule of events for May 16, and Commencement Program	2014
Box 6	Folder 11	Commencement schedule of events for May 21 and 22, Commencement schedule of events for May 22, and Commencement programs	2015
Box 6	Folder 12	2nd Annual Lavender Graduation Ceremony program, Commencement schedule of events for May 19, Commencement schedule of events for May 19 and 20, and Commencement Programs	2016
Box 6	Folder 13	Commencement program	2017
Box 6	Folder 14	Commencement programs	2018

Box 6	Folder 15	Commencement program	2019
Box 7	Folder 1	Departmental Commencement programs: School of Business, School of Education, School of Nursing, Health, and Exercise Science	2020 (held in 2021)
Box 7	Folder 2	Commencement program and Departmental Commencement programs: School of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Education, School of Arts and Communication, School of Science, and School of Engineering	2021
Box 7	Folder 3	Commencement program	2022
Box 7	Folder 4	Commencement programs and Departmental Commencement programs: School of Arts and Communication, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Science, School of Education, School of Engineering, School of Business, and Master's Ceremony	2023
Box 7	Folder 5	Commencement programs and Departmental Commencement programs: School of Arts and Communication, School of Science, School of Engineering, School of Business, School of Nursing and Health Sciences, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Education, Master's Ceremony	2024
Box 7	Folder 6	Keepsake Commencement programs	2024