

MEMORANDUM

TO: State University System Presidents

FROM: Chancellor Ray Rodrigues

DATE: April 30, 2024

RE: Commencement Ceremony Advisory

Presidents, I want to begin by commending you on the great job you have done during this difficult academic year to ensure the safety of our Jewish students and faculty. As you recall, on October 9, 2023, I reminded everyone of the need to ensure that Jewish students can participate in all educational programs and activities free from discrimination and in a safe environment, free from intimidation, harassment, threats, and physical violence.

Commencement ceremonies are one of the most important traditions in higher education. It is a celebratory time to recognize and honor students who have completed the requirements to earn their degree.

While we are witnessing a descent into chaos all over the country, under the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, Florida has maintained law and order. As the academic year concludes, we must protect the integrity of our commencement ceremonies and ensure the safety of our students. No commencement ceremony should be canceled, or substantively modified, as a result of unruly demonstrators. These ceremonies are important milestones for our graduating students, and we owe it to our students to see to it that these ceremonies take place as planned. While we respect and honor the First Amendment, a commencement ceremony is not the time nor place to hold a political protest.

You are authorized to take any steps necessary to ensure the safety of all attendees during the ceremony. Please promptly inform faculty, staff, students, and guests that protests, discrimination or harassment at commencement ceremonies will not be tolerated.

Florida law requires educational institutions to ensure that all education programs, activities, and opportunities are offered free from discrimination on the basis of race, religion or national origin. The staff at the Board of Governors are available to assist if you have any questions or if you need assistance to ensure that your commencement ceremonies are a time of celebration and remain in compliance with state law.