

# ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## Take the Obama commencement quiz

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For the 15th time since taking office in 2009, President Barack Obama will deliver a commencement speech to college graduates.

This time, it's the 6,375 students at UC Irvine – along with 30,000-plus friends and family – who will listen to the president's words. If past performance is any indication, he'll mix in a little public policy and a dose of inspiration.

But, in the end, Obama will be giving a graduation speech.

And because the learning shouldn't stop at graduation, here are a few facts to consider as the president addresses the UCI Class of 2014.

1. This is the first commencement speech Obama has given in California and only his third west of the Mississippi. The others were Arizona State University in 2009 and the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado in 2012. Six Obama commencements have been in states that touch the Atlantic Ocean. Summa cum laude question: In which states has he delivered commencement speeches more than once?
2. Of the counties in which Obama has given a college commencement speech, Orange County gave him his third-worst defeat in the 2012 election. In that contest, the president lost to Republican nominee Mitt Romney by 69,792 votes - a 6.3 percent margin. Not as bad as El Paso County in Colorado, where Obama spoke to the Air Force Academy and, a few months later, lost to Romney by almost 21 percent. His most friendly county for a college graduation speech? That would be New York County, where in 2012 he gave an address to Barnard College (near Obama's alma mater, Columbia University) and in November picked up 85 percent of the vote. Summa cum laude question: Obama gave a commencement speech in another Orange County. Which one was it?
3. Speaking of Columbia, Obama graduated from the New York institution with 734 other graduates on May 16, 1983. The speaker at his graduation was the school's president at the time, Michael Sovern. In his remarks, Sovern said, "It is my experience that the supply of advice at commencement time far outstrips the demand." Sovern is now a law professor at Columbia and said he barely remembers his own speech.
 

"I always felt this was an occasion which something serious should be said, but not at great length," Sovern said. "This is the students and parents day."

But it's been brought to his attention by some that he was the speaker at Obama's graduation and he's developed a line he tosses around among friends. "I don't have President Obama's autograph, but he does have mine." Summa cum laude question: Why hasn't Obama delivered the commencement speech at his alma mater?
4. When Obama graduated, in 1983, President Ronald Reagan was in his first term. Obama and his classmates were staring down an unemployment rate of 9.8 percent that month. In May, 2014, the national unemployment rate stood 6.3 percent. In 1983, the Cold War was still at its height and Reagan delivered a commencement speech at The Citadel the day before Obama graduated. In it, Reagan said: "Our enemies may be irrational, even outright insane – driven by nationalism, religion, ethnicity or ideology. They do not fear the United States for its diplomatic skills or the number of automobiles and software programs it produces. They respect only the firepower of our tanks, planes and helicopter gunships."

Sovern's speech preached the opposite.

“America needs intelligent activists to work within both of our national parties to nominate men and women committed to effective arms control,” he said. “America needs you.” Summa cum laude question: Who was Reagan’s joint chief of staff in 1983?

5. Obama’s longest commencement speech was at West Point in May. In that speech, he talked about the drawdown of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and cautioned against further interventions. “But U.S. military action cannot be the only – or even primary – component of our leadership in every instance. Just because we have the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail.” Summa cum laude question: What was his shortest commencement speech?

6. It’s not uncommon for graduates to display messages on the tops of mortarboard caps – their Twitter handle, website, request for a job. Not when the president is in town delivering your commencement speech. There are, in fact, a whole host of banned items for graduates in Anaheim today. These include umbrellas (“Wear sunscreen!”, as a commencement speaker once suggested), noisemaking devices (sorry World Cup fans, no *vuvuzelas*), beach balls (it’s not Dodger Stadium) and some obvious ones like lighters (“Freebird” dies) and weapons. Also on the banned list? Can openers. The canned pears will have to wait. Summa cum laude question: What item might Obama be familiar with is also banned?

If you’ve read this far, go ahead and check your answers here to see if you get a passing grade. 1. New York and Maryland. 2. West Point. 3. Tradition at Columbia dictates the president of the school delivers the commencement remarks, though he did give a commencement at Barnard College, which is related to Columbia. 4. Colin Powell 5. U.S Naval Academy in 2013 coming in at 23 minutes. 6. Flowers or flower leis.

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