

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

By Christine Clark

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“60 minutes” Correspondent Bill Whitaker to Address Class of 2020

Seasoned journalist will address more than 8,000 students at All Campus Commencement June 13

Emmy-Award winning “60 Minutes” correspondent Bill Whitaker has been on the front lines of the major news stories of our time. He recently uncovered how Russian operatives hacked the 2016 election, was a moderator during last week’s South Carolina Democratic primary debate and has done extensive reporting on the U.S. opioid epidemic. A journalist with a 30-year career at CBS News who has traveled the globe, Whitaker will share insight with thousands of University of California San Diego graduates as the keynote speaker for the All Campus Commencement on June 13, 2020.

Whitaker has covered three presidential campaigns; interviewed compelling national figures, including former First Lady Michelle Obama; and served as a foreign correspondent in Asia, Africa, Europe, Mexico and the Middle East.

He recently secured the first television interview with Chanel Miller, known for reading a powerful statement at the sentencing of the Stanford University swimmer who sexually assaulted her. Whitaker's exclusive helped shed light on how Miller is reclaiming her identity.

UC San Diego, a community of global scholars recognized as one of the top ten public universities in the U.S., is committed to public service and producing cutting-edge research to address pressing global issues—core values that align with Whitaker's work.

“As a celebrated journalist, Whitaker's commitment to presenting honest, well-researched information with the utmost professional integrity will resonate with our graduates,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “Bill's process of reporting a balanced perspective that encourages open dialogue on the most important issues facing the globe so closely align with the values of our university.”

Award-winning reporting on ‘big pharma’s’ connection to the opioid epidemic

Whitaker's investigation in 2017 with The Washington Post revealed how the Drug Enforcement Agency's efforts to curb the opioid epidemic were hampered by special interests. His reporting revealed the opioid crisis was allowed to spread—aided by Congress, lobbyists, and a drug distribution industry that shipped hundreds of millions of pills to rogue pharmacies and pain clinics providing the rocket fuel for a crisis that, over the last two decades, has claimed 200,000 lives.

Key to the DEA's suppression was a law pushed by drug industry lobbyists. The “60 Minutes” report was credited with forcing the law's chief sponsor, a congressman, to withdraw his nomination for the Trump Administration's drug czar. Whitaker was honored with the Emmy, Dupont and Peabody awards for his work on the stories.

Though Whitaker resides in the Harlem neighborhood of New York, his well-trod media career has taken him across the country and the world. He chronicled the capture of Mexico's infamous drug lord Joaquin “el Chapo” Guzman, shed light on the scrutiny Syrian refugees faced seeking asylum in the U.S., was on the ground during the pro-democracy uprising in Tiananmen Square, and also covered the buildup to Operation Desert Storm.

Domestically, his stories have provided keen insights into the hot-button issue of race and policing in America with his reports from Cleveland, Chicago and most recently, Tulsa, Okla., where he got the news-making first interview with the city police officer accused of manslaughter for shooting an unarmed black man.

In 2018, the Library of American Broadcasting honored Whitaker with the “A Giant of Broadcasting and Electric Arts Award.”

Whitaker is a graduate of Hobart and William Smith Colleges with a Bachelor of Arts in American history and from Boston University with a master's degree in African-American studies. He also holds a master's degree in journalism from the University of California, Berkeley.

Details on commencement weekend June 13-14

More than 8,000 students and 10,000 guests are expected to attend the All Campus Commencement where Whitaker will give the keynote address. The event, open to graduates and their guests, is designed to strengthen the sense of community among UC San Diego students and families by providing an opportunity for all graduating students to come together one final time as the Class of 2020.

The event kicks off graduation weekend at UC San Diego June 13-14. At the event, Chancellor Khosla will officially confer degrees by the academic division and professional schools upon graduates gathered as one student body. Following the ceremony, the campus's six undergraduate colleges, two professional schools, and various graduate programs host personalized graduation events where students will walk across the stage as their names are read. All graduates, families and friends are invited to attend both ceremonies to fully experience the pomp and circumstance, and joy and pride, which mark one of the most memorable times in a student's life.

Below is the 2020 UC San Diego commencement schedule. To learn more, visit the [All Campus Commencement website](#).

Saturday, May 16, 2020

- 10 a.m.–noon | Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Commencement (Price Center)

Sunday, May 31, 2020

- 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m. | School of Medicine Commencement (School of Medicine Ceremonial Lawn)

Saturday, June 13, 2020

- 9–11 a.m. | All Campus Commencement (RIMAC Field)
- 12:30 p.m.–2:30 p.m. | Graduate Division, Master's Ceremony (RIMAC Arena)
- 1:30 p.m.–3:15 p.m. | Earl Warren College Commencement (RIMAC Field)
- 4–6 p.m. | Graduate Division, Doctoral and Master of Fine Arts Ceremony (RIMAC Arena)
- 5 p.m.–6:45 p.m. | John Muir College Commencement (RIMAC Field)

Sunday, June 14, 2020

- 8–9:45 a.m. | Sixth College Commencement (RIMAC Field)
- 9–11 a.m. | Rady School of Management Commencement (RIMAC Arena)
- 11:30 a.m.–1:15 p.m. | Revelle College Commencement (RIMAC Field)
- 1:30–3:30 p.m. | School of Global Policy and Strategy Commencement (RIMAC Arena)
- 3–4:45 p.m. | Thurgood Marshall College Commencement (RIMAC Field)
- 6:30–8:15 p.m. Eleanor Roosevelt Commencement (RIMAC Field)

Note to Media: All reporters and photographers must register with UC San Diego to cover commencement. Contact Christine Clark at 858-534-7618 or ceclark@ucsd.edu.

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