

Harvard Commencement Ticketing Balances Tradition, Security, and Efficiency

4 MIN READ



Keeping Tradition Alive—Safely

For nearly four centuries, Harvard University has celebrated commencement as a signature event.

“We’ve celebrated 371 [commencement ceremonies] over 388 years of existence – this is a tradition older than our country itself,” proudly explained Stephan D. Magro, Commencement Director of Harvard University, from a building on the campus in which George Washington once made himself an office. “By the 1860s, the event had grown to such a size that Harvard alumni formed the Committee for Happy Observance of Commencement – dubbed ‘the Happy Committee’, who still come to Harvard Yard annually to usher in the next group of alumni, dressed to the nines in top hats and tails.”

Each spring, Harvard’s Commencement ceremony is attended by over 32,000 graduates and guests, including members of the community, elected officials, and high-profile guest speakers, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, late Civil Rights leader and U.S. Representative John Lewis, and most recently, New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern.

Needless to say, this event is a big deal with many eyes on it. While security has always been an essential element to consider, safety became top priority following the events of the 2013 bombing at the Boston Marathon.

Like many long-standing traditions, simplicity is part of the appeal. Rather than compromise the historic beauty of the ceremony space or lose the charm of keepsake-worthy physical tickets, the staff at Harvard worked with AudienceView to implement a new ticketing strategy that allows them to get a clear, comprehensive scope of the event using [AudienceView Grad](#) software.

Scenes from [#Harvard22](#) Commencement ? pic.twitter.com/JTq3lnBtGu

— Harvard University (@Harvard) [May 26, 2022](#)

The Solution: Secure, Barcode-Enabled Tickets

Working with **AudienceView Grad**, Harvard implemented an innovative ticketing process to maintain tradition while improving safety and efficiency:

- **Attendee details are collected online**, ensuring accurate data capture.
- **Individual barcodes** are printed on physical tickets and scanned at 11 entry gates, giving real-time visibility into attendance and preventing unauthorized access.

This approach balanced the elegance of printed tickets with the benefits of modern technology—providing Harvard officials with critical data in case of emergencies.

Expert Support On-Site

To guarantee a smooth event—Harvard’s first commencement in three years due to the pandemic—**AudienceView Grad provided on-site technical expertise.**

“Scanners are a huge part of a successful commencement,” explained Sarah Wellman, Senior Solution Expert at AudienceView. “My job is to ensure devices are charged, tested, and the team is trained. Having an expert on-site brings peace of mind so the Harvard team can focus on everything else.”

From device readiness to real-time problem-solving, this hands-on support was key to Harvard’s success.

A True Partnership

Magro emphasized the impact of the AudienceView Grad team:

“Sarah deserves a tremendous shoutout—she helped us record the training module for our security team, covering 11 gates. And Lisa Stichnoth, our Project Manager, was the glue. They never felt like external vendors, but true partners and colleagues.”

With **AudienceView Grad’s platform and expert support**, Harvard delivered a commencement experience that honored its history while setting a new standard for safety and operational excellence.