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Hudzikiewicz bids farewell to commencement planning

■ After 30 years of planning the University's graduation ceremony, Mary Hudzikiewicz has handed over the reins

By LaBree Shide
Oregon Daily Emerald

Anyone involved with planning graduation ceremonies will report that when Mary Hudzikiewicz wears a red dress on Commencement Day, it doesn't rain. Only once has it rained on an outside ceremony when Hudzikiewicz wore a red dress.

The weather on graduation is not the only thing that Hudzikiewicz can take credit for. She has coordinated hundreds of University commencements and brought her personal touch and commitment to University ceremonies for more than 30 years.

This year, she has planned her last and said she has enjoyed the ride.

Graduation is "one of those happy occasions where parents and family and students are celebrating the end of something and anticipating the beginning of a new chapter," Hudzikiewicz said.

Though Hudzikiewicz enjoys planning commencement, she said she realizes that it is time to move on.

"I have a lot of commitments to organizations and to my husband. It's okay to leave now."

Hudzikiewicz has augmented her role in graduation before. Formerly the assistant dean of student life, she retired five years ago and now plans graduation as a contractor.

Hudzikiewicz promises that this will be the final year.

"Next year on Commencement



Jonathan House Emerald

Retiring commencement coordinator Mary Hudzikiewicz (left) helps familiarize her replacement, Rachel Johnson, with fastening graduation banners onto their poles.

Day I will not be here," she said. She leaves graduates and the University in the hands Rachel Johnson.

Johnson has worked with Hudzikiewicz this year and used her as a mentor to learn the ins and outs of graduation planning.

"We found somebody in Rachel who I think is quite capable of taking over," Hudzikiewicz said. "I will miss seeing the faces of the students and the families, I will miss the pageantry. I won't miss waking up at two o'clock in the morning saying 'Oh my gosh, I forgot something!' I won't miss the late nights and the early mornings."

Laura Blake Jones, director of student life, said, "In every little decision she has made about commencement over the years, students always come first and what they need to make the day special

for them."

Stephanie Winchester, manager of The Break pool hall and arcade in the EMU, has known Hudzikiewicz for several years and said besides planning commencement, she is involved with the students. "She encourages and guides students in their academic and other activities," Winchester said.

Hudzikiewicz can recall many stories from her years at the University. Last year she got a call, saying, "Mary, there is poop in the middle of the marching way, what are we going to do?" Hudzikiewicz then called the grounds crew and had it taken care of.

Hudzikiewicz said she remembers the first year that commencement was moved from Sunday to Saturday. All of the cars parked by campus were being ticketed. She had overlooked that detail because Sunday is a free day.

Volunteers and staff members asked Hudzikiewicz for help. She said, "Take them off and bring them to me and I'll take care of

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