

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR



March 17, 2020

Dear Faculty and Staff,

Yesterday I shared the incredibly disappointing news with our graduating students that we have made the difficult decision to cancel May Commencement, given the risk to our community as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve. Please see below the message we sent to the Class of 2020 and their families. I felt it was important to share this with them in the most personal way I could.

We made this decision with heavy hearts, and with the safety and well-being of our university community and the St. Louis region in mind. Nonetheless, it still hurts. Not just for our graduating students and families, but I can imagine for so many of you who have dedicated countless hours planning for an event that for many of us marks our favorite day of the year – a chance to celebrate the accomplishments of our students, and a chance to see the culmination of everyone’s hard work in getting these students to the finish line. I join you in your feelings of disappointment and sadness at what we’ve lost.

Rest assured, many of us have already begun to think creatively and put our heads together to find something positive in this most unfortunate situation. In the midst of our overall response efforts, we’re also brainstorming ways to gather our community together so that we can give the Class of 2020 an appropriate send-off. Please be on the lookout for more details, which we will share as soon as they become available.

For now, please know how incredibly grateful I am for your efforts and the sacrifices you are making. It’s heartening to know we are uniting as a community to face these uncertain times together. Throughout all of this, I have been abundantly reminded of the fact that our community shows up, and that we will do whatever it takes to harness our collective strength to fulfill our mission to improve lives in service of the greater good.

Please continue to take good care of yourselves, and thank you, as always, for your leadership and service.

Sincerely,

Andrew D. Martin
Chancellor

Dear Class of 2020 students and families,

I hope this email finds you and your loved ones safe and well — and please know how immensely grateful we all are for the sacrifices you are currently making to protect yourselves, your communities, the country, and the world. This is, indeed, an extraordinary time, and we must continue to pull together and harness our collective strength in service of the greater good as we work quickly and diligently to flatten the curve and mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Although this week is off to another frenzied start, with even more news pouring in from our leaders and the Centers for Disease Control, I ask that you take a moment to pause and watch this video address to you — our graduating students and family members.



Since I recorded this video earlier in the day, the words “I’m truly sorry” have continued to resonate with me. Above all else, I do want you to know how truly sorry I am that this is not turning out to be the end of the semester we had planned or dreamed about. Nonetheless, I’m grateful you are taking the time to watch, listen, and understand the role you play to radically curb this current pandemic. One day, when our children and grandchildren read about this moment, I hope they, too, will learn about the sacrifices you made.

As I mentioned in the video message, we are currently working through plans for what will happen in order for you to officially graduate, and importantly, how we can celebrate your accomplishments together, for now virtually, and, we hope, in person a bit down the road. You can expect to learn more about those plans very soon and throughout the remainder of the semester.

Thank you, once again, for all the ways you represent the Washington University values of leadership, sacrifice, and civic duty as you help us fulfill our mission to improve lives in service of the greater good. Until the time comes when we have the chance to see each other again and celebrate this significant milestone, I encourage you to be well, stay safe, and know we are thinking of you and wishing you all the best in the days and weeks ahead.

Sincerely,

Chancellor Andrew D. Martin

Andrew D. Martin
C H A N C E L L O R

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