

April 1, 2020
Spring 2020 Commencement Plans Announced

Dear Graduating Students -

We know these last few weeks have been a time of uncertainty for you as you approach the completion of your academic degree requirements and have looked forward to celebrating with your classmates, family and friends at May commencement.

Commencement is one of our most cherished traditions as twice a year we celebrate the academic accomplishments of our students and look forward to the new beginnings that this ceremony symbolizes. During this very unusual time that is affecting our nation, nearly every college and university across the country has been faced with the decision to delay or make alternative plans for spring commencement. These decisions are not easy, and they are not made lightly.

We recognize how important this moment is to you and your family — and it's very important to us as well as we look forward to celebrating our graduates each year. We know you have been wondering how we will celebrate the May 2020 class, and we have been hard at work making plans. So, here is what we are planning as a way to honor and recognize the May 2020 class.

May 2020/August 2020

- **Baccalaureate.** This is a special tradition that is a moment of worship the day before commencement. We are planning a **virtual baccalaureate** for Friday, May 1. We hope you and your family will make plans to join us for this final time to worship together as a class.
- **College and department celebrations.** We know that you are very connected to your colleges and programs. Since we cannot be together in person in May for our usual dinners and celebrations, each college and department will plan a **virtual celebration** for you and your classmates. You will enjoy time with your faculty to celebrate all that you have achieved together.
- **Conferring of degrees.** We will officially confer your degrees as planned on May 2. Many of you have jobs and graduate school plans following graduation and we know it is very important for you to have your degrees. So, we will send your diploma and a special graduation packet to you in May after the official conferral date.
- **August graduates.** Many of you had elected to participate in the May commencement exercises, since we do not have an August ceremony. August graduates are invited to participate in the December commencement exercises. For those successfully completing degree requirements this summer, your degrees will be conferred on the official conferral date of August 1. Your diploma and a special graduation packet will be mailed to you in August following that conferral date.

December 19, 2020

- **Commencement.** We commit to you that you WILL have the opportunity to participate in an on-campus ceremony complete with cap and gown and a celebration for you and your entire family. You are invited now to make plans to participate in the December commencement and to enjoy this celebration and walk across the stage to be recognized for your academic achievements. We know that many of you will have moved on to jobs, graduate school and life in locations across the nation but we hope that you will make plans to return to campus to be a part of this very special day.

In the next few weeks you will receive more details about the May events to celebrate and memorialize your graduation. Know that we are proud of your hard work and for finishing this semester strong! Thank you for your patience as we navigate this unusual time together.

W. Craig Bledsoe
Provost