

Sent: Thursday, March 26, 2020

Subject: A message about commencement from President Marcia G. Welsh, Ph.D.

Dear Warriors,

I hope this message finds you, your family members and loved ones safe and in good health as we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. I think about all of you each day and am constantly reminded of the many interruptions you've faced this semester – the student research symposium postponed, athletic seasons canceled, gatherings with friends unmet and even those occasional visits to the Rec B or the Mattioli Center. I want to thank you all for the courage you've shown as Warriors. You've managed to push through the uncertainty and continue your studies despite the challenges faced. I've heard from a number of you and I want to thank you all for your support of our efforts to provide you with a solid education even though it must be administered from a distance. Above all, many seniors have reached out to me, their faculty or other staff members to ask about plans for ESU's spring commencement ceremonies, originally scheduled for Friday and Saturday, May 8 and 9, 2020.

While we know you see this as the culmination of your educational experience at ESU and a time to celebrate your accomplishments, we must, at this time, cancel the ceremonies in Koehler Fieldhouse. Our decision is based on so many unknowns about COVID-19 and how long it will affect our world. So it is with a heavy heart that I must tell you we are opting to cancel spring's commencement ceremonies in order to ensure your safety and that of your family and friends, our faculty and staff. Instead, we would like to invite all of you to join fellow Warriors who will graduate in December 2020. While not ideal, the opportunity will enable our spring graduates to walk across the stage, be acknowledged publicly, and accept your degree as family and friends look on. It is also a chance for you to come back to campus and reconnect with faculty and friends one more time.

While disappointing for you, my hope is that you'll recognize the silver lining in this decision. For those who complete all of the requirements of their programs, your degree will be conferred on May 8 (graduate) and May 9 (undergraduate), you will have the credentials you've earned, and you will be able to move forward to accomplish your career ambitions and goals. You will not need to wait until December to receive your diploma, which will be sent to your address of record on Friday, June 26, 2020, assuming all requirements have been met for graduation in your chosen major(s). Students can view the completion of their degree on Friday, June 12, 2020 for final transcript orders. May graduates will also receive a commemorative commencement program/booklet and other pertinent items associated with your graduation. Further updates will be announced at a later date.

If you've already purchased a cap and gown at the University Store but do not plan on attending December's commencement, you will receive a full refund for your cap and gown. Refunds will be automatic for those who elected to pick them up at GradFest, which was scheduled for April. The refund will be received within two weeks. For those who had their cap and gown shipped to a home address, you will need to return the package to the University Store in person or by mail (once normal operations resume). To purchase a cap and gown for December 2020 commencement, please contact Joe Knorr at jknorr@esu.edu, and he will coordinate the order and delivery.

I want to thank you all for continuing to be brave and fearless in these strange times. I am incredibly proud of who you are and the tenacity and resilience you've demonstrated as members of the Warrior family. I miss you terribly.

Marcia G. Welsh, Ph.D.
President

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