

A Message from MSU President Mark E. Keenum

As a follow-up to our announcement relating to Spring 2020 commencement ceremonies, I wanted to offer this personal message. I share the disappointment so many of our graduates and their families have about postponement of our regular commencement events. The most meaningful facet of my role as president, by far, is graduation.

I look forward to these events as we take time to celebrate the accomplishments of our outstanding graduates. My heart truly breaks for our graduates that the Covid-19 pandemic has forced all of us into these extraordinary circumstances.

Our administrative team, faculty and student leaders had extensive discussions about commencement ceremony options. One option was to postpone the traditional events until August, but with the uncertainties of this pandemic, we could very well not be out of danger by then. I cannot imagine giving false hope and then have everyone suffer yet another disappointment if we could not convene in August.

In our deliberations, we were certain of one thing: we could come up with an event that would highlight and congratulate our graduates and allow them to celebrate this important moment with their families on May 1st by means of a virtual ceremony. An additional option is to have our spring graduates join us at the end of the Fall 2020 semester in December for traditional commencement events, if we have received clearance from our health professionals and government leaders by then.

I am also open to revising the plan to provide an opportunity for traditional ceremonies in late summer or early fall, but we cannot know at this time whether that would be possible. These circumstances are beyond our control. In the meantime, I do believe it is important to celebrate our graduates in some way on May 1st, which would coincide with their scheduled graduation.

In any event, one other thing that I dearly want to do is to take a photo with every graduate from our spring semester. Our graduates are an extension of my family, and it would mean a lot to me to make this opportunity available to each member of the class. I plan to organize future events to provide the chance for me to visit with each graduate. This is very important to me and something I sincerely want to make happen as a means of offering my congratulations in a very personal way.

I feel the deep disappointment our graduates feel. This is not what any of us could have envisioned for the end of the Spring 2020 semester and the completion of an important time in the lives of our graduating class. But we are committed to celebrating our graduates and their accomplishments and wishing them well as they begin careers and assume leadership roles in the world that will make us all proud.

Hail State,

Mark E. Keenum, President
Mississippi State University