



Monday, March 23, 2020

Dear Graduating Seniors and Graduate Students,

Last week, we shared with you our decision to cancel the 2020 Commencement ceremony due to the coronavirus threat to everyone. We have heard from many of you and we understand the profound disappointment, sadness and perhaps anger you feel about not being able to celebrate your achievements on May 17, 2020, as planned. We empathize because we have similar feelings about it. You have worked very hard and you deserve to be recognized. You deserve to celebrate with your families and friends. But because there are so many uncertainties surrounding this global health crisis right now, we could not guarantee our ability to conduct a ceremony and still assure the health, safety, and well-being of all of you, your families and friends, other guests, and our campus community. Again, we truly regret that we have had to make this extremely difficult decision.

Just because we canceled Commencement 2020 does not mean we have forgotten about it. Quite the opposite is true. Senior leadership and key administrators continue to brainstorm alternative ways that we might be able to recognize, award, and celebrate our graduates at a later date. When the time is right and the current situation with the COVID-19 (coronavirus) has sufficiently stabilized, we will share more information with you about recognizing your achievements. We want all Heidelberg graduates to have a joyful and safe commencement experience.

In the meantime, we would like to share some good news with graduating seniors and graduate students who had planned to participate in the Commencement ceremony and were charged the \$120 graduation fee. This week, we will be adjusting your OASIS account to reflect a credit of \$70 of that \$120 fee. The difference of \$50 will cover the costs incurred for diplomas, diploma cases, postage, and administrative fees. Your diploma, in its Heidelberg University diploma case, will be mailed to your permanent address following the end of the semester. (If you need to change your address, log into your OASIS account and click the Personal Information/Change Addresses and Phones tab.)

Some of you have asked about caps and gowns, and many of you were measured for these back in September. We have not yet placed the order for caps and gowns. Those who are interested in still purchasing a cap and gown will have that opportunity. Instructions will be provided at a later date.

Finally, we wish to express our understanding more personally. Both of us have been fortunate and grateful to experience undergraduate and graduate commencement exercises in our respective careers. More importantly, both of us are parents. Beth has two daughters, each of whom graduated from their colleges over the past three years. Those ceremonies are wonderful memories in Beth's family. Rob also has two children, both of whom are attending out-of-state colleges that have shut down and moved online like Heidelberg. And like our seniors, Rob's daughter is a senior who has lost the end of her college experience and does not know if she will have a graduation celebration. That will be a different memory in Rob's family.

When we are able, in the future, we look forward to celebrating your graduation with you and your family. We appreciate your patience and understanding.

Most respectfully,

Rob Huntington, President

Beth Schwartz, Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost