



**UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

February 3, 2021

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

Welcome back for the start of a new semester! Although the distribution of the vaccines is a source of great hope, we recognize that for the foreseeable future we must continue to be diligent and attentive to all of our health and safety protocols. Amidst the challenges of the pandemic, it is great to have many of you back on campus. I am deeply grateful for the care and concern you have shown for one another, and for the ways we work together to keep every member of the Notre Dame family and surrounding communities as safe as possible.

I write to provide an update on our planning for the two Commencement celebrations planned for May 2021—Commencement for the Class of 2021 on May 21-23, and Commencement for the Class of 2020 on Memorial Day weekend, May 28-30. I know that there are many questions about these celebrations given the pandemic. COVID-19 obviously continues to pose a great risk to public health and safety. Although we cannot be certain of what conditions will be at the end of May, we want to communicate our current plans so that you can make your plans.

Given what we know now and informed by the guidance of public health officials, we expect the Commencement events for the Class of 2021 to take place in-person on the dates scheduled, in accordance with appropriate health and safety protocols. We believe at this time that we will be able to safely host these events—with some modifications, of course—with and for our graduates who will have been on campus all semester, and therefore subject to regular surveillance testing and the many other public health protocols that are in place. We will assess the situation as the date draws closer and keep you informed. At this time, we hope to be able to also welcome to campus a limited number of family and guests for these celebrations. We will offer family members and guests the opportunity to be part of the

festivities virtually as well. Please visit the University's Commencement website in the coming weeks for more information about Commencement 2021.

With regard to the Class of 2020, I have communicated to our graduates that unfortunately, we must again defer our in-person celebration. When we formulated plans for Memorial Day weekend 2021 last spring, we could not know how long and difficult the pandemic's trajectory would be. Celebrating the class of 2020 is challenging, because members of the class, their families, and guests must all travel to the region from various parts of the nation and the globe. After conferring with public health experts, we do not believe that by Memorial Day 2021 it will be possible for us to safely host such a gathering. For those who graduated in 2020 with undergraduate degrees, we now plan to host a celebration in the summer of 2022. We will invite their feedback through a survey to determine the timing and features of such a celebration. For those who earned doctoral, masters or professional degrees in 2020, the respective schools will each initiate conversations with their graduates to gather ideas on how best to further celebrate their achievements.

The University has also canceled the two in-person Alumni Reunions planned for June 2021 for those classes and groups that would have normally celebrated Reunion in summer 2020 and summer 2021. The Alumni Association will share additional information on upcoming virtual offerings and events for these classes and groups to be together.

Among the great challenges of the pandemic is the uncertainty about the future it creates. That demands uncommon flexibility, understanding and patience from each of us. I thank you for the compassion and perseverance you have shown to date and will show in the future. Let us continue to be kind to one another, rely on each other, and—together—do our best to thrive in this challenging time.

In Notre Dame,

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President