

Rescheduling Our 2020 Commencement Ceremonies

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Dear members of our Saint Louis University community,

Thank you to our newest alumni and your supportive families who have patiently waited for an update on an event I know many of you have looked forward to for 20-plus years: commencement.

Regrettably, after much discussion, we have decided to postpone both the May 2020 and the December 2020 commencement ceremonies until May 2021.

I cannot imagine how difficult this is for many of you to hear, and for that, we apologize. The decision was made after much discussion and deliberation among a working group of faculty, staff, students and administrators.

When we [surveyed students in April](#) about rescheduling commencement, it was clear that graduates wanted a ceremony as soon as possible. Unfortunately, it is becoming less and less clear that a fall or winter ceremony is realistic. It is frustrating to feel as though we are beholden to a virus, but that is our reality.

During the past few weeks, we not only considered but also started to plan for a fall commencement, knowing that is what our students wanted the most, but it became clear as time went on that this was not feasible. A fall or winter commencement, we realized, would have to include masks, social distancing among graduates (likely leading to more than one ceremony), limited audience capacity, and no handshakes or celebratory hugs with faculty, staff and your fellow graduates. A commencement without these traditional components is not the commencement you deserve.

Granted, we cannot guarantee a May 2021 commencement won't include some of those public health safeguards, too. Only time will tell. But we have hope in our hearts that an event in May 2021 will give us the time we need to make this joyous occasion one that our graduates deserve.

I know you will have many questions, such as what this means for pre-commencement events and baccalaureate Mass. We will work through these in the months to come.

President Pestello has requested that we host these ceremonies separately, in the order they would have proceeded in were we not in a pandemic. He also asked a small group to work on maximizing the events. This includes working with student leaders to decide upon a nationally prominent band for a concert celebrating the graduating class of 2020.

Know that our first priority is keeping our Billikens, families and community safe. Our next priority is giving the class of 2020 the celebration you deserve. You have certainly earned it.

Thank you and God bless,

Chet Gillis, Ph.D.
Interim Provost