



University of Idaho

TO: University of Idaho Students, Faculty and Staff
FROM: Scott Green, President
DATE: July 6, 2020
SUBJECT: Aug. 1 Commencement Canceled

Many communities across our state and region have seen spikes in COVID-19 cases. Some have taken a step back in their reopening plans including the city of Moscow, which is now requiring face coverings in public. This is a reminder that it is imperative we all work together to stay as safe and healthy as possible and why we continue to require face coverings in all of our buildings on campus and throughout the state.

A recent analysis of those who planned to attend the Aug. 1 Commencement ceremony revealed that over 40% would be traveling from counties in our region experiencing spikes in COVID-19 cases. Unlike our preparations for the fall where we will be testing students for COVID-19, we are not able to test all of the graduates, relatives and friends who would have been making the trip to Moscow. Because of this, we are canceling our Aug. 1 Commencement ceremony. We simply can't risk bringing in hundreds of people from hotspots throughout the region for one weekend without the ability to identify those who may be ill — it isn't fair to our community. We will, however, recognize the many accomplishments of the Spring and Summer 2020 graduates with personalized video messages and social media attention beginning at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, Aug. 1.

In a few short weeks, we will welcome students back to campus for the fall semester. We will test all of our students as they return to the Palouse, giving us a baseline to work from. We have detailed plans for isolating and helping any student who becomes ill and/or tests positive. Starting today, all faculty, staff and students need to acknowledge the Healthy Vandal Pledge when signing onto VandalWeb. The pledge includes wearing masks inside campus buildings, self-checks and isolation when necessary.

No one is more excited to have students back on campus than I am, and no one is more concerned about the safety of our entire Vandal Family than me. Months of planning have gone into making our campus, centers, research and Extension sites as safe as possible. We will meet or exceed CDC and Idaho Department of Health guidelines. If each of us does our part, we can identify, isolate and protect our community, just as we did this past spring. We are a destination campus, and that has been true for 130 years. We cannot thrive as an online-only option. Many students are delaying, avoiding, even changing their choice of where they are currently enrolled based on whether their instruction will be solely online or will be offered through live or hybrid instruction. Faculty interaction is key to the great work we do here — the work our students deserve.

We recognize that the current situation is dynamic, and we stand prepared to go solely online should we find ourselves unable to keep our community safe. We will continue to communicate often. We are Vandals, and we will stay strong and persevere.

Keep Calm and Vandal On.

Scott Green

President

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