May 29, 2020

Class of 2020:

Your graduation is one of the most important milestones in your life. While we can’t be together this Saturday as originally planned, we have been working hard to find the best way to celebrate your success.

Like many of you, it was our hope to hold an in-person ceremony. While the pandemic continues to evolve, we know that hosting an event as large as our Commencement Ceremony – which typically brings together more than 3,000 guests, including students and their families as well as faculty and staff – will not be possible in the coming months. If we do not invite any family or friends, we still have the potential for 600 to 900 graduating students to be in attendance. We cannot hold an event of this size with current or anticipated social distancing guidelines. Planning for any type of event takes months to coordinate, regardless of the format. In light of the end of the semester and the many remaining unknowns due to the pandemic, we wanted to make a decision with the information we have right now and begin planning for a truly unique celebration as soon as possible.

We were surprised to see that many students are interested in holding a virtual graduation. More than 250 students responded to the graduation survey and a virtual commencement was voted as the first choice for many students – more than the other options presented.

Given the student survey feedback, as well as the continued uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic and its long-term impact on large-scale events such as our commencement ceremony, we have decided not to delay your celebration too much further and move forward with a virtual commencement ceremony. Students wishing to walk across the stage in person will have the option to attend the 2021 Commencement Ceremony.

In the coming weeks, we will provide the date of the virtual Commencement Ceremony as well as instructions on how you and your families can participate. We will also be distributing caps and gowns prior to the event. Stay tuned for more information.

In addition, we have received inquiries about other celebrations specific to programs such as the nurse pinning. We are not able to set any dates for in-person ceremonies of any kind at this time. Your program instructors will notify you when this changes.

We hope you can join us for our re-imagined commencement ceremony in celebration of the class of 2020 – it will be a wonderful event nonetheless! The event will feature many of the same elements of traditional in-person commencement, including giving a shout out to each and every one of you who rightly earned your credential.
Offering the ceremony online will also provide the opportunity for your friends and family from all around the world to participate in the event, in real time. If they miss it, a recording will be available to watch at a later date. We will continue to post updates on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) web page; please frequently visit www.BristolCC.edu/coronavirus.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again say, congratulations class of 2020! You did it!

Best wishes,

Laura L. Douglas
President