May 8, 2020

Dear Class of 2020,

We know this is not the celebration you’d envisioned. This is an unprecedented time, and we know that the COVID-19 pandemic is having a great impact on your life.

We know that you were not expecting to wrap up your academic career at UGA and the College of Public Health online. Your farewell conversations with favorite faculty and your celebrations with classmates are happening on Zoom.

Many of you have not had the chance to say goodbye to the campus and the city where you created lifelong memories. Your long-awaited commencement ceremony, fireworks and all, has been postponed.

So much of what will happen in the next months and years is uncertain. But – we know some things that are certain.

You have chosen a field that is needed now more than ever. At all times, but especially now, the public health workforce is called upon to provide leadership and to provide evidence-based information to our communities and local decision-makers.

Public health researchers and practitioners are contributing every day to the COVID-19 trackers and models helping us predict local, state and national caseloads. We are investigating why the virus is disproportionally affecting the vulnerable. We are consulting with national and state leaders on policies to keep everyone safe. We are developing community health behavior campaigns to educate the public.

As you take your next steps in your professional careers, trust in your training to take on the challenges that face us today and in the future. Regardless of whether it is infectious disease or chronic disease or environmental safety concerns, you will be needed to promote and protect the public’s health.

And you won’t be alone.

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The community of faculty and staff at the College of Public health will always be here to support you. The virus has changed many things, but it hasn’t changed everything.

It hasn’t changed all you have learned about public health. You have been trained to engage in complex issues and collaborate with communities to deliver meaningful and impactful solutions.

It hasn’t changed your passion for serving. We know so many of you find public health because you want to help others. Let that passion carry you along the path that lies ahead. And, the virus hasn’t changed our collective mission – to protect and improve the health of all.

I am honored to be your dean, and I am so proud of your commitment to this College and this field.

Congratulations, Class of 2020. Your time is now. And we can’t wait to see what you do!

Sincerely,

Marsha Davis, Ph.D.
Dean