

2020 Commencement Angels

Greetings! Welcome to your 2020 Commencement...*in 2021.*

Although you likely have mixed feelings about being in a baseball stadium for your commencement, keep in mind that this is first time in the university's history, we're holding graduation events off campus. You're pioneers.

We've moved here because we've not only heard your requests for a ceremony, but we've been working to do this...to bring your class back together so that all of us here can acknowledge your accomplishments and continue wishing you all the best on your respective journeys.

Before proceeding I must thank family members, faculty, staff and friends for being there for our graduates – for their wisdom, love, care, guidance, patience and support. You all deserve special recognition. *Thank you for all you did to make this moment – as well as last year's virtual commencement – possible.*

I'm sure each of the graduates are thankful that they've had their loved ones and supporters, and as a community we've all had each other. One of the great things about a Beach commencement is that while we are honoring our graduates and welcoming them to a community of alumni, we also are recognizing everyone who helped and guided graduates on their respective educational journey. Again, thank you all.

Since last March, we all have been hoping for some type of return to "normal." With close attention to public health directives, the campus' hard-working teams, and the promise of the vaccines have now given us a much-needed light at the a once-very dark tunnel. We still have

some distance to go and so I hope each of you will get vaccinated and continue masking and distancing until we reach a truly safe place.

Now, class of 2020.

It feels like just yesterday that I was speaking to some of you, at least, at a SOAR event. I was urging you to be an engaged student and take advantages of all the Beach has to offer. I hope you took that advice for at least your first almost 3 years! But whatever you did, you're here now. Wow. You've earned college degrees in a once in a generation pandemic. It's never easy, but you've made it during historically difficult times. Way to go!

I can't put a sugar coating on the last 13-14 months but I can hope that you learned some skills that will support you in the future. Without the social support of your peers, you had to manage time and attention in new ways. Without the high-touch environment of the campus you had to keep your motivation high on your own to get to this point. And you did it. You learned to learn in new ways. Some of you struck out and got certificates from any number of industry and learning center points. I saw that on LinkedIn and was very proud. You managed an entirely new environment. Not fun, but a gold opportunity to prove and improve your resilience.

A trite saying is that 80% of success is showing up. It's not easy to keep showing up, but you persisted and now you get to show up as a university graduate. In all you do in the future, whether it's in your personal or professional lives, showing up, being present, being engaged, being an initiator will be the path to success.

You've no doubt come to understand that your education at The Beach was just the beginning of your journey with us. Commencement wasn't the end of your journey but, instead, an important celebration marking

your next big step. You're already members of our 350,000-plus strong alumni family and we are glad you remain connected to your alma mater. The Beach will be there for you for life!

As you know, challenging times lie before us – they always do. That's life, right? But that's the real reason we devote time, energy, money and more to education: It's prepared you to overcome adversity, shown you how to serve others, and taught you how to create opportunities out of hardship.

For all of you who have patiently waited for this ceremony, thank you for your perseverance. I'm delighted to know that you're already a part of our alumni family and making a difference in our communities.

Congratulations, good luck...and ***Go Beach!***