

MIDAMERICA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY

Dear MNU Students and Families,

This has been an unprecedented few weeks for our nation and the MNU community. Our lives have changed dramatically and we are dealing with complex issues we never dreamed we would face. We have all been confronted by decisions and those impacting students, especially our graduating class, have been the most challenging and heartbreaking of all.

It has been a great year in so many ways and I know the past few weeks have been filled with disappointment for you, your classmates and your families. Your disappointment is shared by the entire MNU family. The campus is very quiet. Although the buildings and landmarks are all physically here, and thankfully the internet is still working, the halls, offices, classrooms and Campus Center aren't the same because your spirit, energy and excitement is missing. You make MNU come alive and hum with activity and we miss you.

Our hearts were heavy as we canceled dozens of campus activities, productions, concerts, athletics and many special year-end events. The decision to defer commencement for our undergraduate, professional and graduate students was most difficult because I know how hard you have worked to achieve this goal. I am sure you understand the risks and uncertainty were too great and the need to protect the health and safety of all is paramount. We are not sure what the next few months will bring but are hopeful we will find a way to celebrate at a later time.

Faculty and staff are working heroically to move classes to an online format and set up support systems for remote operations. I know you appreciate the magnitude of this challenge for everyone. Our faculty and staff are amazing and you can be proud of the incredible effort they are shouldering to prepare the way for you to complete the semester. The rumblings of the Pioneer Spirit are evident even if we are socially distant because we are still connected by the presence of God working in our midst. Although we are told to "wash our hands" instead of reaching across the aisle to "hold hands" as we do at the end of chapel, the words we repeat so often seem even more appropriate. Be resolute, give it all you've got and love without stopping.

I know we can do this, and we can do it together.

I want to encourage each of you to electronically reach out to your classmates, roommates and friends over the next few weeks; encourage each other and together press on to complete your academic work for the semester. Specifically to our graduates, press hard to finish the degrees you have worked so hard to earn. Faculty and staff are working hard to provide support and assistance you may need and will do all they can to help you. There will be challenges and glitches along the way, but be patient. We will work through them to get it done. We have extended the semester by two weeks to provide a little extra academic space and time.

I am confident this school year will be remembered for many years to come. You, as a student body, will be praised for your courage and resilience under extremely difficult circumstances. You can have confidence today that our God is at work in the midst of this storm and he has promised peace in our hearts and freedom from fear. This scripture has been a significant reminder to me over the years:

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how we can spur one another on toward love and good deeds." – Hebrews 10:23-24

The "muddle in the middle" was the theme of my last chapel time and we are indeed in the middle of a messy muddled set of circumstances. Be reminded that God generally does his best work when we are in these messiest places of life when things get so fouled up, and it seems like everything is falling apart. That's when giving up is tempting, but don't go there because it's there in the middle of our circumstances that God does the most amazing things and always does more than even we can ask or imagine. In these next weeks, let's reach out to each other and together grab God's hand. As we do, I am confident God will give us strength in weakness and freedom from fear as he demonstrates his power to overcome through those who trust and lean on him.

I know we can do this ... Go Pioneers!



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