



July 14, 2020

Dear Heidelberg Class of 2020, Families and Community,

Today, the Heidelberg Senior Leadership Team made the painfully difficult decision to cancel our planned August 29 in-person Commencement ceremony on campus. We had very much looked forward to recognizing and celebrating your academic achievements on Saturday, August 29. A large Commencement Committee began making plans for this wonderful celebration at a time when the outlook for the COVID-19 pandemic was more positive and projected to further decline in Ohio. That is not the case now. Unfortunately, the spread of COVID-19 is surging in our state, just as it is in about three-quarters of the states across the nation.

With the reported spread in large congregate settings – despite sanitization practices, physical distancing and universal mask wearing that are known to be effective in preventing COVID-19 spread -- we would not be able to guarantee the health and safety of you and your family, our students on campus, or the campus community. Other large-scale campus events are being retooled with the same health and safety priorities in mind.

I understand that this announcement might create yet another layer of disappointment, sense of loss, and perhaps even exasperation, for those of you who were making plans to return to campus for this celebration, and especially for the 84 graduated seniors and their family members who had registered for this event already. I want you to know how deeply we regret having to make this call. We weighed many factors and scenarios, and ultimately, we were guided by our priority for the safety and well-being of everyone on our campus. We determined that the risk of a large gathering of this nature is simply too high. We cannot ensure the health and safety of everyone at an event with 300 guests on campus at this time, given the pandemic surge.

I want to reiterate that all of us who would have participated in Commencement with you, along with the faculty and staff who had been busy this summer planning the details and logistics for the ceremony, are equally disheartened that we will be unable to celebrate this Heidelberg tradition together.

Graduates who ordered a cap and gown from the Herff Jones website, and who wish to cancel or return those items for a refund, should contact Herff Jones representative Cliff Fehr at cfehrway@hotmail.com.

The fact that we won't be able to honor you and your achievements in person does not diminish our pride in the Class of 2020. You are now a member of a large network of 'Berg alumni who stand together to recognize and honor you, and to welcome you into the Heidelberg alumni family. We would like to leave you with a few fond memories of your graduation, unique and challenging as it was, so we are working now on producing the official Heidelberg Commencement 2020 program, which we plan to mail to all of the graduates, along with a 2020 tassel and a specially designed 'Berg facial covering.

Thank you for your understanding. We wish you the very best as you pursue your chosen career and fulfill your life dreams going forward.

Most respectfully,

Robert H. Huntington, Ed.D.
President