

From: Rosen, Lee
Sent: Friday, April 16, 2021 4:49 PM
Cc: Zehle, Christa H; Dohrman, Elizabeth A
Subject: Commencement for the class of 2021

Dear Class of 2021,

We are writing to give you information about Commencement 2021 for the Larner College of Medicine.

We know how much you wish for an in-person Commencement. We wish for that, too, but with the pandemic still with us, for now we need to make the best adjustments we can. Accordingly, Commencement 2021 for the Larner College of Medicine will take place virtually on Sunday, May 23, at 3:00 p.m. You will be receiving more detailed information about this in the coming days.

You may have read about UVM's plans for in-person undergraduate commencement events. These will offer far fewer of the usual components that typify graduation from an M.D. program. Hooding, for example, would not be allowed, or a chance for each graduate to offer their words of thanks; and there would not be a student singer, or an invited commencement address, or a student speaker, or a chance for faculty to deliver their best wishes. Our online ceremony is planned with all of these elements, including the option for your family and friends to participate in your hooding, something the class of 2020 found very meaningful.

All of the possible versions considered for an in-person event did not offer the inclusivity that we would require. Many of our fourth-years have moved already. Our surveying has showed that only about half the class of 2021 will still be in the Burlington area by the latter half of May, and able to take part in an in-person event. Many family members and friends would not be able to attend an in-person event because of vaccination status or work obligations that are too late to rearrange. A remote commencement offers full participation for all the members of the class of 2021 and their loved ones. There are potential equity issues with some students (and their friends and families) having difficulty arranging late notice travel and lodging.

While an in-person option would allow two vaccinated guests per student, you and your guests would be present at a very pared-down "touchless" event, mostly focused on the distribution of a diploma cover (which would not contain your actual diploma), after a recorded voice announced your name. The event would be over in a relatively short time and would not allow gathering together as a class before or after. We also know that being hooded by a chosen person is a very important part of our commencement ceremony for many medical students. Hooding would not be permitted at an in-person event. Finally, there is also always the chance that an in-person ceremony will need to pivot to all-virtual in the event of severe weather or a COVID surge.

We learned last year how special and satisfying an online Commencement can be. Last May we were treated to a personal, intimate ceremony, and one that, thanks to the livestream, was available to family and friends from around the world to share in real time and relive afterwards through the video of the event. We very much look forward to celebrating the class of 2021!

With appreciate and admiration for all you have accomplished.
Lee Rosen

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