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Dear Graduating Class of 2020 and the Incoming Class of 2024,

We hope this letter finds each of you safe and well as we approach the much-anticipated in-person Commencement Ceremony for our Class of 2020 graduates on August 8 and New Student Convocation on August 9 for our incoming Class of 2024. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of necessary and, what we believe to be, prudent changes to the original plan for these events that Westminster College sent on July 2 and July 27 based upon the constantly changing climate of COVID-19.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all and continues to, daily. We diligently continue to do our part to protect, to the best of our abilities, our Westminster College community, especially our campus constituencies. We have taken significant precautions and continue to do so every day to safeguard these individuals from the COVID-19 pandemic. Most recently, we announced the postponement, cancelation, or other modifications of several Westminster events. Our COVID-19 Task Force made these necessary scheduling modifications after carefully monitoring local, county, state, and federal guidelines. Each day, the Task Force tracks the state, county, and local COVID-19 cases and related data as well as seeks other informed parties' guidance on these matters.

The College's Commencement and New Student Convocation events have been subject to this same rigor of analysis and evaluation for several months, taking into account the health and well-being of all involved while balancing our strong intent and desire for these ceremonies to be as memorable and safe as possible. With that said, as noted in a very recent White House coronavirus task force report, Missouri is now listed as a red zone as a result of a steady increase in COVID-19 cases. Therefore, after deliberate and careful consideration of our recently reported local cases, other related information, and the desired intent of a majority of our graduates to attend Commencement, we have decided to continue with in-person, outdoor-only, Commencement and Convocation exercises. However, we have made the following modifications and changes to the event schedules:

- Regretfully, families will no longer be invited to attend in order to reduce the number of guests on campus. The ceremonies will be recorded and [livestreamed](#) for those who cannot attend.
- Most staff and faculty will not attend the exercises.
- Masks will be required and worn inside and outside for the duration of the ceremonies by all participants, except for those speaking.
- The platform parties will include only those participating actively in the ceremonies, including our Commencement and Convocation speakers.

I can personally assure you that we did not make the decision to limit guests lightly, and we are disheartened that many, including a great number in our campus community, will not have the opportunity to celebrate with our respective student classes at this time. We also recognize that many families and other guests have made plans, including extensive travel arrangements, to attend these ceremonies. Also, many on campus have undertaken significant efforts to plan these events, which is greatly appreciated by a number of people, including me. However, the College truly believes this is the right decision in order to protect, to the best of our abilities, the campus and external communities while continuing to offer in-person ceremonies. I understand there will be a wide range of emotions that many of you, your families, guests, and others will experience, and we understand those reactions. Personally, I understand those emotions very well, as my wife and I experienced the same situation, with little notice, for our own son's college graduation this year, which we could not attend in person.

As stated in our previous communications, in carefully following safety guidelines, we have carefully implemented a number of necessary changes to the ceremonies to ensure physical distancing and other precautions. Those remain in effect. More detailed schedules with further safety instructions can be found on the [Graduation](#) and [First Year Information](#) pages of our website. For your further information, please read the [news release](#) sent to local media regarding this information.

Finally, with federal and state health recommendations in mind, we ask you to stay home if:

- You are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or are otherwise not feeling well.
- You have been in close contact with someone who is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, has tested positive for COVID-19, or is otherwise not feeling well.

Although the formats of these milestone ceremonies have changed, the alterations do not diminish, in any way, the accomplishments of the Class of 2020 or our excitement for the Class of 2024 in taking their initial steps to join the Westminster College community. Congratulations to each and every one of you, and we look forward to seeing you soon!

My best regards,

**Donald P. Lofe, Jr.**  
Interim President and Chief Transformation Officer

For participating graduates whose plans have changed, please contact [Alumni@WCMO.edu](mailto:Alumni@WCMO.edu) in order for Westminster to update its seating arrangements.

*All Commencement and Convocation 2020 activities are subject to change. In the case of inclement weather, the ceremony may be delayed or canceled.*