

March 27, 2020

Dear Iowa State Community,

I want to share two powerful messages that came to my attention this week.

“My son is in a somber mood. Perhaps you are, too.”

That’s how [Katharine Johnson Suski’s letter](#) begins, aimed at future students who’ve been accepted or received offers, plus prospective students and their families. It’s currently posted as one of the banners on Iowa State’s homepage.

Katharine, our Director of Admissions, moves quickly from the story of her own son, a freshman in college, to concern about her audience:

“We’re thinking about you. We’re worried about you. We want to make the process easier for you.”

Katharine does a beautiful job expressing herself: Heartfelt, empathetic and informative. She goes on to outline eight steps our Admissions Office is taking to relieve tensions around upcoming decisions and deadlines.

That’s the kind of message we’ll continue to repeat, and I hope you will refer to in your own communications with prospective students and parents as they weigh factors to make decisions in uncertain times.

The second message was delivered by University of Utah President Ruth V. Watkins to currently enrolled students. Her message: [Keep going](#). Her closing paragraph includes these lines that especially resonate:

“Stay on your academic paths. The rewards for doing so will last a lifetime, long after the coronavirus pandemic fades.”

For our students, the rewards include the high rate of return for an investment in an Iowa State education. It was well-documented in last fall’s announcement on the [\\$3.4 billion impact](#) Iowa State has on the state’s economy — including higher future earnings for degree-holders that grow throughout their careers.

The other lifelong rewards revolve around purpose: The desire to make a difference. As we look ahead to a post-pandemic world, there’s no doubt how important well-prepared, innovation-minded Cyclones will be for the future of Iowa and beyond.

We hope for a speedy path toward an effective COVID-19 treatment, but we know there will never be a vaccine against uncertainty. That's why we can learn something from Katharine Johnson Suski and Ruth Watkins — and from all your efforts to tell our students: You are our future. We need you. Stick with us, and we'll make it through together.

Wendy Wintersteen
President

P.S., Our faculty have risen to the challenge in our new virtual environment! Click [here](#) and [here](#) for some great examples of their creative approaches to connect and engage with students.