

May 8, 2020

Dear Iowa State Community,

Did you see Christopher Gannon's photo of Thanh Nguyen in *Inside Iowa State* yesterday?

Seeing Thanh's [joyful jump](#) on central campus did my heart good, and I hope it did yours, too. On Saturday, Thanh will be one of the nearly 5,100 students who attain the goal of their Iowa State adventure — their academic degree.

We come to the close of a semester like no other in Iowa State's history. But we end it like we always do — in celebration.

I invite you to join our virtual graduation weekend with prerecorded ceremonies that launch Saturday at 10 a.m. on virtual.graduation.iastate.edu. Thank you, Jennifer Suchan, our university registrar, and the commencement team for going above and beyond to honor our Class of 2020. I'm proud, too, that our colleges, student organizations, and affinity groups are paying tribute to graduates in traditional and creative ways.

Let me echo what you'll hear from the student speakers across these celebrations: An enormous sense of gratitude to our faculty and staff for all they've done to support, mentor and prepare our graduates — including a spring semester where, despite our separation, found new ways to keep connecting and inspiring.

I want to share a few lines from remarks I directed to our graduating seniors for the undergraduate ceremony tomorrow:

I hope you realize how important today is — not just for you and your friends and family. It's bigger than that.

One of the phrases we often hear lately in the news is "essential personnel": Who's required to be on the job, working for the rest of us, no matter what happens.

Today, in a much broader sense, I want you to know that each one of you is essential.

Because if someone demanded me to account for the hope I feel inside today — despite our challenging and anxious times — I would point to you. You are essential. You've earned your place here today, and in our common future together.

That's worth celebrating. I do feel hopeful. I feel the joy I always do after every graduation — knowing that our students' adventures continue as proud Iowa State alumni.

Wendy Wintersteen
President

P.S., Class of 2020 Spotlight: Learn more about the unique Iowa State adventures of four graduates: [Tyler Beers](#), [Dawn Hales](#), [EllieMae Millenkamp](#), and [Vincent Valeriano](#).