



March 18, 2021

Dear Graduating Students:

We hear you. We know you're disappointed to be missing a traditional, in-person Commencement. We are too. That's why, together, we are creatively planning for face-to-face celebrations that will mark your huge accomplishment, even as we stay within New York State's health and safety guidelines.

I want to be really clear about *what* we're doing and *why* we're doing it, and how you can be involved.

First, the *why* part. **Under current New York State guidelines, no more than 150 people can participate in outdoor gatherings.** That's scheduled to expand—but not by a lot. [Effective April 2](#), the state will allow outdoor gatherings of up to 200 people outdoors, or 500 people *if everyone is tested beforehand*. In other words, no matter what, **we are simply not allowed to hold our traditional, large events**, even if we moved everything outside, even with testing. (About 6,000 people typically fill Radio City Music Hall. Close to 3,000 come to Goldstein Fitness Center.) That's why we're going to make the main part of the Commencement ceremony—the national anthem, the speeches, the special awards—virtual.

We talked to our usual partners at Radio City Music Hall. We talked to Citi Field, Yankee Stadium, Madison Square Garden, and other locations. Central Park won't close down a section for a private event like ours. Everywhere, capacity restrictions present an insurmountable problem. And even as the world opens up, all of these venues will have conflicts with their own planned events.

Now let's talk about the *what*. **Our virtual ceremony will be only *one* part of your Commencement. Your full Commencement will be a combination of the virtual formal ceremony and smaller, safer, in-person celebrations.** These celebrations will be school- or even program-based. They'll probably be outdoors. If rules change, we'll take advantage of reduced restrictions wherever possible. That's a big advantage of this combined Commencement—we can have some flexibility for these smaller, in-person events, even though we know things like large venues and keynote speakers can't be rearranged at the last minute. Even if regulations change, you should expect that the in-person events will be for Pace Community members only. The virtual ceremony will allow you to celebrate your accomplishment with your loved ones.



We know this isn't ideal. Throughout this past year, you've proven your resilience and determination to succeed. **Now, we're just as determined to make Commencement meaningful, and to make sure you get an opportunity to celebrate with your classmates, faculty, and staff.** We're working with student representatives, and with the schools and colleges, to come up with these plans. We're open to any and all suggestions, and we want to hear your ideas. Talk to your student reps, or email us at [studentcommencement@pace.edu](mailto:studentcommencement@pace.edu).

**If the last year has taught us anything, it's that we can be resourceful and creative. Let's work together one more time to make this Commencement a memorable and unique moment.**

Sincerely,

Hillary J. Knepper, PhD, MPA  
Interim Associate Provost for Student Success