

March 16, 2021

Dear Graduates and Graduating Students,

**We are writing with some updates on our commencement plans.** We heard from some of you at our recent Commencement Q&A Zoom session last week, and others have emailed with thoughtful questions and input. In addition, we recently attended a Zoom meeting with nearly 200 representatives from private colleges in New York State to discuss potential commencement plans and learned that we are all struggling with similar decisions and restrictions. We all want to be able to celebrate our students in the manner that they deserve, while still adhering to public health guidance. One of our greatest challenges is that we are still awaiting official guidance from the State regarding the planning of commencement ceremonies. We hope to receive more definitive instruction soon.

While we await further direction on what the required parameters will be, we need to move forward with our planning. In addition to the original plans we put forward, we have made the following adjustments after considering student input.

- 1) **Our on-campus graduation ceremonies on May 11-13 will now be “Regalia Optional” events.** This means that students who purchase caps and gowns will be able to wear them at the department graduation ceremonies. It also means that those who do not wish to purchase caps and gowns will not be excluded from these events; they can opt to wear professional/business attire instead. We want these celebrations to be as inclusive as possible.
- 2) **We commit to doing everything possible to allow students the experience of walking across a stage at the on-campus graduation ceremonies.** While we suspect that State guidance will prohibit the usual handshakes or handing out of diploma covers, if the guidelines permit, we will make arrangements for students to process across the stage, while maintaining a safe social distance from each other, when their names are called. This may add to the length of each ceremony, but we know how important it is for students to be recognized in this way and we commit to doing so, as long as State guidance does not prohibit it.

Based on all of the information we have been provided to date, **we are not able to open up our on-campus graduation ceremonies to any guests.** Current (and anticipated) capacity limits and social distancing criteria will only allow us to include graduates and faculty at these celebrations. We know this is disappointing for graduates, but we must adhere to all pandemic protocols and prioritize the health and safety of all in our community.

We will continue to update you and our plans as we receive additional guidance from New York State about commencement ceremonies. Until then, **we encourage you to refer to [Sage.edu/commencement](https://www.sage.edu/commencement) with any questions or contact us directly at [deanofstudents@sage.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@sage.edu).**

In addition, we are hoping to gather as many responses as possible to our [Graduate Survey](#) so we can continue to plan our upcoming celebrations. **Please take a moment to complete this [brief survey](#)** if you have not already done so. If you wish to order a cap and gown, you must do so online by **April 1st**.

Thank you.

Christopher Ames  
President



[Russell Sage Commencement Page](#)

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