



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

560 N. Park, 4th Floor – PO Box 203201 – Helena, Montana 59620-3201
(406) 449-9124 - FAX (406) 449-9171

To: Montana Board of Regents; Montana University System Chief Executive Officers;
Montana Community College Presidents; Governor Steve Bullock

From: Clayton T. Christian, Commissioner of Higher Education

Date: April 1, 2020

Subject: **Spring 2020 Commencement Directive**

I am writing with an important announcement regarding commencement ceremonies. After close consultation with the Board of Regents and campus leadership from across the Montana University System, I am directing our campuses to cancel in-person Spring 2020 Commencement events.

I share this directive with great sadness, as Commencement is a rite-of-passage for our graduates as well as their families and friends. Commencement is a ritual – a celebration of achievement and of the hope and opportunities that lie ahead. It is a canvas on which lifelong memories are painted. But as we know all too well, this spring is different. The safety of our graduates, their families and the communities surrounding our campuses supersedes our desire to mark this important milestone in person.

We trust our campuses will find alternative ways to honor the tremendous achievements of their students while reflecting the distinction of holding a degree from a Montana University System institution. For some campuses this may mean postponing the in-person Commencement ceremony until a later date. Others may choose to leverage new technologies to honor their graduates.

Let there be no doubt: Commencement represents something incredibly important to everyone who makes up the Montana University System family. As we move toward May, our collective excitement, inspiration and pride will swell the same way it does every spring as we recognize this academic, professional and personal milestone for our students and their families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clayton T. Christian".

Clayton T. Christian
Commissioner of Higher Education