Dear Humphrey School Students, Staff, and Faculty:

We are reaching out with information about this year’s commencement ceremony.

Per guidance from Provost’s office, colleges have the choice to move forward with in-person, hybrid, or virtual commencement. After much deliberation, the Humphrey School is moving forward with holding a virtual commencement ceremony.

This decision is made based on multiple factors:

- As we have seen over the last year, guidance around events is ever-changing. Where we are today, could be different in May. Moving forward with a virtual ceremony will limit our need to create undue stress for students and their families by pivoting last minute should state/federal guidance around events change.
- Currently, the limit for in-person events is 250. Factoring in the number of graduates and faculty, this would mean attendance of family members would be extremely restricted. Commencement is a moment of celebration and we do not want to exclude family and friends from attending.
- Finally, many of our students who are graduating, particularly international students, are not currently located in Minnesota. In addition, if there are graduates who are uncomfortable attending an in-person ceremony, we do not want them to feel pressured in any way. We want our ceremony to be inclusive for all graduates.

Here is our current plan for the virtual ceremony:

- We will hold two virtual ceremonies on **Saturday, May 15**.
  - At **1:00 pm**, we will hold a ceremony for all Master of Public Policy graduates. We will also confer Ph.D. honors at this time.
  - At **3:00 pm**, we will hold a ceremony for all Master of Development Practice; Master of Human Rights; Master of Public Affairs; Master of Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy, and Master of Urban and Regional Planning graduates.

- The ceremonies will feature:
  - Opening remarks by Dean Laura Bloomberg
  - Presentation of year-end awards by Associate Dean Catherine Squires
  - A keynote address by commencement speaker, Keesha Gaskins-Nathan
  - Conferring of degrees. Names will be read by the head of each program, and we will have an accompanying slideshow of each graduate’s photo for when the name is read.
  - Student speakers. In the past, one student speaker has been selected on behalf of all graduates. This year, we would like to highlight all of our programs. We are asking students from each degree program to select a representative who will deliver 3-4 minutes of remarks during the ceremony. So, for example, the graduates of MS-STEP will select an MS-STEP graduate to speak on behalf of the cohort. The selected students will provide prerecorded video comments to play during the ceremony. All graduates should nominate their choice for a student speaker using this form.

If you are planning to graduate, please make sure you have completed the check-list, which can be found on our website. Students who have been approved for graduation will receive a follow-up communication in mid-March.
asking for your photo (for the slideshow), how you would like your name to appear in the program, any guidance you feel is appropriate for name pronunciation, and reminding you to nominate a fellow graduate as a speaker.

The ceremonies will take place over Zoom. We will send a link to the entire community and post it on our website by mid-April. Please share that link with your family and friends.

We look forward to celebrating the incredible success of this year’s graduates.

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