CHS family,

May is a month filled with several long-awaited and much-anticipated milestone events – high school and college graduations, faculty promotions, and, for me, my daughter’s wedding. I know we had all planned to celebrate many joyous occasions this month, and then our world was upended.

**Convocation**
This week we launched 822 CHS graduates in a first-ever virtual convocation. Saying goodbye online certainly was not what we envisioned, and I admit I missed not being able to watch the students process into the arena to “Pomp and Circumstance,” shake their hands as they crossed the stage and dance out of the arena as the balloons dropped. I also missed the opportunity to see their decorated mortar boards. However, I believe that this year’s virtual event will be just as memorable — it was very creative, and in some ways, more intimate. I was able to spend more time getting to know something about each student as I scrolled through the online grad cards and read their messages. And the more personal format of our student selfie video allowed me to hear the authentic voices of our graduates as they spoke with passion about their hopes and dreams for the future. It is obvious to me that the students in the Class of 2020 are imaginative, flexible and resilient, qualities that will surely serve them well as they move on to the next step in their journeys.

**Promotions**
We also celebrated 13 CHS faculty who received promotions:

- Six assistant professors were promoted to associate professor with tenure: Adela Grando, Mac McCullough, Beate Peter, Corianne Rogalsky, Corrie Whisner and Yi Zhou. They have worked tirelessly for six years, and are accomplished scholars in their areas of research, teaching and service, well deserving of this distinction.
- Five lecturers were promoted to senior lecturer: Karen Gregory-Mercado, Teresa Hart, Micki Hrncir, Jordan Miller and Lauren Savaglio. These faculty demonstrated sustained excellence in teaching and increasing levels of significant service.
- Two clinical assistant professors were promoted to clinical associate professor: Kate Helms Tillery and Kristen Will. These individuals have distinguished themselves by their outstanding instructional, clinical and service contributions to the college and their fields.

Please join me in congratulating all of these impressive faculty! They are valued members of our CHS family, and we look forward to seeing what they accomplish next. Faculty, I
encourage you to take your role as leaders to heart: Reach out to mentor a junior faculty member, and help lead them to professional success through your guidance and example.

**Wedding**
My family’s spring plans were also upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. While I would usually be standing on the stage in Desert Financial Arena this time of year wearing my graduation sneakers, this May I planned instead to be at my daughter’s long awaited wedding, and would have put on a pair of specially-made cowboy boots to walk her down the aisle as she married the man of her dreams. The wedding was supposed to have been a big family reunion with sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents and friends coming to New Mexico from all over the United States to celebrate with us. Because the event was scheduled for the same week as convocation, I had already planned to videotape my speech for the live ceremony. It’s ironic that, in the end, the videotaped speech was the only thing that happened according to plan.

**Silver linings**
No one could have foreseen how these milestone events turned out. Little did I know that I would be videotaping my speech, not because of my daughter’s wedding, but because convocation would be virtual. Or that I would deliver promotion news via 13 Zoom conversations with faculty instead of congratulating them over tea and cookies in my Health North office.

Yet . . . Our graduates received their diplomas. Our faculty can proudly update their CVs with their new titles. My daughter’s wedding will take place one day. And we are as proud of and happy for all of them as if we had been able to celebrate as we had planned this May.

Warmest regards,

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