



March 18, 2021

Dear Members of the University Community,

While we are still saddened by the recent loss of Father Pilarz, we can through the rest of this semester and beyond ensure that his legacy on campus remains strong. For this reason, I know that he would insist that we look forward to the coming milestone of Commencementweekend with joy and promise.

We have been cautious in planning future events and milestones, since the start of the pandemic, especially Commencement activities. In fact, we were among the last schools in the country to cancel in-person Commencement last year. Our approach has helped us to adapt when circumstances change. As we plan Commencement this year, I'm pleased to say that the changes have been positive.

Because of recent modifications in Pennsylvania's pandemic restrictions, the University has determined that we will hold in-person Commencement ceremonies for undergraduate and graduate students. On March 15, 2021, Governor Wolf announced new pandemic response guidelines that allow 25 percent occupancy for indoor venues. The University has traditionally held its Undergraduate Commencement at the Mohegan Sun Arena, Wilkes-Barre Township. One of the beneficial outcomes of this change is that the indoor capacity of the Arena has increased to 2,500 people.

Considering these new capacity guidelines, we have revised our plans for 2021 Undergraduate and Graduate Commencement. **The most substantial changes are to move Commencement weekend to May 22-23 and to divide the traditional undergraduate ceremony into three distinct ceremonies (one per college or school) in order to keep the overall attendance at any one event below the 2,500-person limit.** Secondly, in order to accommodate as many students and guests as possible, the Graduate Commencement Ceremony will be moved to the Mohegan Sun Arena. As we have in the past, Commencement events will be available for live online viewing. Our plans are now as follows:

Commencement Weekend is Moving to May 22-23

Commencement weekend will move to May 22-23 instead of the original dates of May 29-30. For health and safety reasons, the decision makes it possible for students to return home sooner by holding Commencement nearer to the submission of final grades. Consequently, traditional senior week activities will not occur.

Because of this change, the University will mail individual diplomas to students in June. Each student will receive a ceremonial scroll at their respective Commencement ceremony when crossing across the stage.

Graduate Commencement: 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 22, at Mohegan Sun Arena

Graduate Commencement will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 22, at the Mohegan Sun Arena. Each graduate will be provided four tickets for guests.

Undergraduate Commencement Ceremonies by College: Sunday, May 23, at Mohegan Sun Arena

The University will conduct one Undergraduate Commencement ceremony for each college or school on Sunday, May 23, at the Mohegan Sun Arena. Each graduate will be provided four tickets for guests. The schedule for the three ceremonies is as follows:

9:30 a.m. Panuska College of Professional Studies Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony
1:00 p.m. Kania School of Management Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony
4:30 p.m. College of Arts & Sciences Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony

Class Night, Baccalaureate Mass and Other Events

Class Night will be held virtually at 8 p.m. on Friday, May 21. A virtual Baccalaureate Mass will be available for viewing at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 22. The schedule and plan for other Commencement events will be shared shortly.

Safety Precautions for All events

- Each graduate will receive four tickets for guests in order to ensure that the total number in attendance does not exceed capacity allowed.
- Students will proceed directly to their assigned seats and will not gather for a formal procession.
- Families will be asked to sit together and to maintain appropriate social distance from other groups.
- Masks will be required at all times during the events.

Various University offices, especially the Office of the Registrar and Academic Services, will share more detailed information directly with students and families in the days ahead. Updated information is also available through the [Commencement website](#).

We are pleased to be able to plan for an in person Commencement, given how important this milestone is in the lives of our students and their families. Of course, the pandemic has taught us all the need to be flexible should we need to adapt to any changes in federal or state guidelines between now and May.

I'm very grateful to the leadership of the Student, Staff and Faculty senates for their advice and counsel. I know that they, and the entire University family, look forward to joining me in congratulating all of our graduates during our Commencement weekend celebrations.

Sincerely,

Jeff Gingerich, Ph.D.
Acting President

Provost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs