

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact:

Jeff Murphy

Assistant Director for Media Relations

Integrated Marketing and Communications

660-543-4640 / jmurphy@ucmo.edu

Unable to Meet Historical Standard of Celebration, UCM Cancels Commencement Exercises Scheduled For Aug. 1

WARRENSBURG, MO (July 16, 2020) – After weighing the desire to provide the same kind of quality commencement experience that other University of Central Missouri graduates have enjoyed against current, increasing limitations posed by COVID-19, UCM today announced it is canceling commencement exercises planned for Saturday, Aug. 1. Campus leaders will continue evaluating ways to appropriately honor spring and summer 2020 graduates and their families, and will keep the campus community informed of any such plans. Individuals who were eligible to walk during the August ceremony also have the option to participate in the December 2020 or May 2021 ceremonies.

“Commencement is a proud tradition we have celebrated for 149 years, so it is incredibly disappointing we will not be able to conduct a ceremony in August, particularly understanding what it means for our students and their families,” said UCM President Roger Best. “While much planning has taken place, we have determined that the manner in which we were having to move forward with commencement against the backdrop of this very fluid and unpredictable environment did not allow us to fully honor our graduates as we have done throughout the university’s history.”

The university annually celebrates its spring and summer commencement in May. Because the campus was closed due to coronavirus in spring 2020, the event was rescheduled to Aug. 1, and preparations were being made to conduct four ceremonies on Aug. 1. Doing so, however, also resulted in strict limitations on the number of guests students could invite to the ceremony in order to foster social distancing, according to Centers for Disease Control guidelines. This did not allow the university to maintain its historical standard of celebration/honor, as full attendance by families was not possible, nor would graduates have the opportunity to be recognized on stage. Additionally, the gathering was still considered a higher-risk event based on the CDC

--more--

Equal Education and Employment Opportunity

guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html>).

Best pointed out that the response to commencement – with over 1,000 students indicating intent to participate – was outstanding. This, however, coupled with the number of potential guests, even in an alternate venue such as Walton Stadium, contributed to concerns about social distancing and the ability to ensure that everyone in attendance wore face coverings as required by UCM at on-campus events.

The university continues to monitor COVID-19 and its impact on other university events, including future commencement exercises. Individuals can follow updates about future commencement plans at ucmo.edu/commencement.

#