

FHSU bringing graduating Tigers, families and friends in for a hashtag celebration

Perhaps you are thinking that spring commencement ceremonies have come and gone. Well if you enjoy the delight of celebrating the accomplishments of your friends and loved ones, you will want to pay special attention to the university's [Facebook page](#) and social media tomorrow (June 19).

Traditionally, students walk across the commencement stage in May and receive an empty diploma cover. Following the ceremonies, faculty and staff hang up their regalia, finish grading papers and exams, post grades, certify degree completions, and then order the significant pieces of paper that officially declare one is a graduate.

The lack of a 2020 commencement ceremony this past month was clearly a huge disappointment. It weighed heavy on my heart. So many disappointed graduates and families felt the loss of not being able to gather in Gross Memorial Coliseum and take that victorious walk across the stage amidst the love of family and friends and the pride of our faculty and staff. We were, however, well equipped with many accolades and social media posts to declare “well done” during the month of May.

But we are not yet done.

At Fort Hays State, we wanted to go the extra mile to really commemorate the delivery of the diploma. So, for the past several weeks, 90-plus faculty and staff gathered to pack a special care package for each of our approximately 1,800 graduates.

Each box – white, with custom FHSU logo shipping tape and a Tiger sticker – contains a student's official cap and gown (and hood for master's and doctoral grads), a commencement program and, of course, the coveted diploma. It is a celebration kit in a box – each personalized and packed in black and gold tissue paper with love and admiration for our graduates.

To aid in a proper exhibition of Tiger pride, each box also comes with a Tiger decal for sticking on something prominent and an enameled metal Tiger pin for wearing.

To aid in a proper celebration, each box contains confetti for throwing and a horn for blowing.

I cannot wait for the students to open their care packages!

Tomorrow will be the official second round of congratulations to honor our spring and summer 2020 graduates – a well-deserved encore. Our goal is to capture the energy and joy that families share during a typical commencement and create a reprise of memorable social media posts and, most importantly, family celebrations.

And with reopening plans expanding throughout the country – there are even more opportunities to make the day a big family celebration.

Please join us to celebrate our newest alumni. Graduates and their families have been encouraged to post videos of their personal celebrations between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. using the event hashtag – #TigerGrad. The Alumni Association, faculty, and staff have posted images, video congratulations and encouragement messages. A friend of mine even built a stage in her backyard so her niece could wear her cap and gown and walk across a stage. I love it!

I encourage families to feel free to deliver their own commencement speeches to acknowledge the hard work it took for their graduates to earn their degrees and to wish them well in the future. And of course – don't forget the balloons, flowers, and cake!

Congratulations, class of 2020! We cannot say it enough. We are proud of you. We look forward to seeing your future successes and to forging strong ties between you and this university. Enjoy your FHSU Commencement celebration packages. Remember, as you move forward and start something new, we will always be ready to cheer you on and help in any way possible, and we will always be with you.