

Dear Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine Graduating Students:

The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine Convocation Ceremony is an extraordinary event for all our graduating students and their guests. It is a milestone event for all, and a moving recognition of your professional accomplishments, of your unbelievable dedication and commitment, and of the unfailing support of your family and friends who helped make your achievements possible.

On March 18, 2020, we informed the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine community that the School of Medicine in-person Convocation was cancelled and that we would be working on alternative plans. We have been working with the Office of Online Education and the Office of Strategic Communications to create a virtual ceremony that will be tailored to meet the needs and priorities of our graduate and medical students, and that we believe will do honor to this milestone event.

While certainly less than the ideal of the in-person event we had all envisioned, anticipated, and hoped for, the virtual ceremony will preserve many elements of the actual event and create a tone and atmosphere appropriate for the day. We wanted to share some details of this event.

The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine Convocation Ceremony will take place as originally scheduled, at 2:30 pm on May 20, 2020, albeit virtually.

A Convocation Program will be developed in the usual manner. The Program will be available electronically for the virtual ceremony, and printed copies will be mailed to each graduate rather than distributed in person. Diplomas and a graduation gift from Alumni Affairs will also be mailed to each graduate.

The individuals who were scheduled to speak at the in-person ceremony will record comments as part of the virtual event. The Dean will address the graduates, as will a recent alumna, the graduate and medical student speakers, and Drs. Espenshade and Koenig.

Dr. Bonnie Bassler will be delivering the Convocation Address as planned. Dr. Bassler is Professor and Chair of Molecular Biology at Princeton. She is a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator and she was awarded a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 2002. Dr. Bassler received her PhD in Biochemistry from Johns Hopkins University. Her research focuses on the molecular mechanisms that bacteria use for intercellular communication in a process called quorum sensing (<https://scholar.princeton.edu/basslerlab/home>).

Dr. Bassler was the director of the Molecular Biology Graduate Program at Princeton from 2002-2008 and she currently chairs Princeton University's Council on Science and Technology which has revamped the science curriculum for humanists. She is a passionate advocate for diversity in the sciences. Her 2009 TED talk entitled, "How bacteria 'talk'" has more than 2.7 million views to date (https://www.ted.com/talks/bonnie_bassler_how_bacteria_talk?language=en).

We know that the recitation of the Hippocratic and Graduate Student oaths are a priority for our graduates, and the Office of Online Education has developed a format we believe will appropriately

honor that tradition. We also recognize that the hooding of doctoral degree candidates by their mentor or another faculty member is an important aspect of academic tradition, and we are planning to invite this year's graduates to return in May 2021 to participate in a portion of next year's Convocation ceremony if they choose to do so.

There can be no doubt that the amazing and inspiring feeling of an in-person ceremony cannot be created in any other way. Family, friends, and faculty will not be able to applaud, cheer, and smile for you in person, and there can be no congratulatory hugs. At the same time, we hope that this virtual event will capture some of the awe and wonder of the actual event, and perhaps even allow some family and friends to "attend" who might not have been able to travel and participate in person.

The virtual event would not be possible without our student leaders, Kaiti Wood and Madison James from the Graduate Student Association and Sarah DiNapoli and Jeremy Applebaum from the Medical Student Senate. They reached out to you to learn what is most important to you for this event, and made sure that students' needs and priorities could be represented in the virtual event as much as humanly (and technologically) possible.

Congratulations to all our graduates. We look forward to celebrating with you virtually and to one day being able to share the in-person applause, cheers, smiles, and congratulatory hugs you so richly deserve.

Bryant and Roy

William Bryant Faust IV, EdD
Associate Dean and Registrar

Roy C. Ziegelstein, MD, MACP
Sarah Miller Coulson and Frank L. Coulson, Jr., Professor of Medicine
Mary Wallace Stanton Professor of Education
Vice Dean for Education, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine