

## **For 2020 Graduates from the School of Education**

**From Wendy A. Paterson, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Education and BSC graduate '75 & '76**

This message is sent with a full heart and an unquenchable enthusiasm to the class of 2020. There will never be another class like you though you wish you had not been the class chosen to endure a human tragedy unlike any in our lifetimes.

We do not need to remind you that you are unique, but we do need to tell you that you are our inspiration. We have followed your stories of courage and tenacity and compassion from the sidelines instead of from the front of the classroom, and what we have seen humbles us, renews our faith in the power of teachers and sets the scene for you to be known as the “new” greatest generation.

Unlike the greatest generation of your grandparents and great-grandparents who faced the bombs, and bullets and devastation of two world wars, your generation has faced a silent enemy whose ranks are seemingly infinitely resourceful and globally insidious.

Some of you have been at “the front” facing down the virus and holding up those it struck down. Some of you helped those children and families forced to seek frightened shelter in their own homes not knowing when it might be safe again to play with friends or comfort a child with a warm embrace. Through it all, however, you shone your light into that darkness. You sang your homemade songs and read your books on video and took meals to children who relied on them. You brought balloons and drove your cars in joyful parades. You learned to teach in a flattened world and you developed your ability to see the children and young people on your screen as you have never seen them before.

You, not the software of the hardware or the curriculum, have helped create a “new normal,” that may not feel quite like the places you left, but most certainly are safe places where your students can rely on their connection to you and keep learning and discovering and delighting in the moments of laughter and joy that seem borne aloft in the ether of our human connection no longer dependent on sharing a room or a school building or even a country. You have learned to teach under duress and you have triumphed. You will be what the coming generation needs more than ever...strong, resilient, brave, resourceful, creative.

We, your grateful faculty stand for you now. You have made your mark on the world without ever seeking to do so. Be proud that you are the one and only graduating class of 2020. With tears of love we thank you. And as Winston Churchill once said to that other “greatest generation,” “Never, never, never give up.”