A message to students from Dean Ira Solomon

November 23, 2020



Dear Freeman School Students,

Greetings! I shall begin this message with four words: *Congratulations! You made it!* After what arguably is the longest and hardest year that many of us have experienced, the end of 2020 is finally in sight. And not a moment too soon. Recently, I saw what seems to be an online urban legend — in one of the *Back to the Future* movies, Doc Brown supposedly whispers to Marty McFly “Whatever you do…don’t go back to 2020!” If Doc Brown spoke those words, his advice could not have been more prophetic.

What a challenging year this has been! You have lived and are living it so I will not recount those challenges. Rather, with the recent news about new medications and the several promising vaccines that are approaching what seems to be the end of the approval process, I choose to optimistically focus on the future. I firmly believe that our prospects for a return to some form of *normalcy* are rising and fast. Things

will get better and soon. Some things, however, will endure — our new lexicon of words and phrases with which we wish we were less acquainted: social distancing, personal protective equipment, community spread, flatten the curve, quarantine. And, of course, there will be great lingering sadness due to the loss of people who contracted COVID-19 and did not survive.

I also want to communicate how impressed I have been with you. In spite of the COVID-19 extraordinary challenges, you remained committed to your educational goals. You did not give up, and you did not allow Covid-19 to take this year from you. You found new ways to learn, study and collaborate with your peers. You fought through periods of fear and loneliness, and answered back with strength and spirit. You adapted, re-adapted and re-readapted again as the world changed around you. You showed that you can overcome the unimaginable and that you will not be beaten by hardship. While I wish these lessons could have come under different circumstances, they are highly valuable. Never forget how *resilient* you are, and how to change tactics when confronted with adversity. These lessons will serve you well throughout your career, and indeed your life.

During this holiday break, I urge you to take every precaution to protect yourself and others from Covid-19. While we all are exhausted by the limitations to which we must adhere, please remain vigilant and act in the best interest of public health. As the virus continues to spike around the nation, we must re-commit to safety measures and put our health and the health of those around us above all else. Tulane's motto *Non sibi, sed suis* — not for one's self, but for one's own – has never been more significant.

I wish you a warm and healthy holiday season and look forward to your return in the spring. I am optimistic that 2021 will bring not just hope, but real progress toward a safe and fruitful future for all.

Sincerely,

Ira Solomon, Dean