



Dear PDBio and Biophysics Graduates:

Congratulations on completing your degree! I know that many of you were looking forward to celebrating with family and friends in the on-campus graduation festivities. Unfortunately, for all of us, the “selfie” opportunities (you dressed in graduation robes, standing in front of your favorite iconic BYU backdrop) will have to be postponed. This experience reminded me that nearly 30 years ago, I left the BYU campus in April, headed for a very uncertain future. I also was unable to “walk” in my graduation ceremony. With one religion requirement remaining to complete my degree, I headed to Arizona with my wife to finish that “distance learning” genealogy class, and wait to find out if and where we would be attending graduate school. Like many of you did during winter semester, I submitted assignments remotely...via USPS. If only Learning Suite or Canvas, or even email was available in 1992, my life would have been so much easier! I did get into graduate school, and graduated from BYU without fanfare. Ultimately, life resumed as if that “summer of uncertainty” never really existed. Looking back now, that summer made many great memories, culminating with the birth of our oldest daughter!

While we continue to hope, fast, and pray that the current state of uncertainty will be short-lived, please take a moment to reflect on your BYU experiences that have prepared you for “life-resumed!” Many of you worked in research labs on campus. Thank you for contributing to and learning from our academic research programs! Some of you worked as TAs. Thank you for teaching your peers, and showing love where we as faculty couldn’t! Others simply made BYU better by helping a friend or classmate. Thank you for contributing to the BYU environment! I am confident that your experiences here have helped shape your very bright futures.

In the short term, please celebrate your graduation with family, then make the most of your “summer of uncertainty” by planning (and playing!) with purpose. May you be blessed with the birth of new ideas, new relationships, or new challenges in your life. Whatever your future holds, I want to encourage you to regularly reach back to faculty who impacted your education and BYU experiences. We as faculty are often blind to the successes of our past students but are always uplifted when we hear from them! Make it a habit to keep in touch, thereby helping us know how to build the next generation of successful students.

We’ll never forget the **CLASS OF 20(COVID-19)20!** Thank you for being a part of the BYU community, and once again, congratulations!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael R. Stark". The signature is stylized and includes a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

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