Conferring Degrees, 2020

As the coronavirus pandemic spread, Harvard announced on March 20 that it would postpone (but not permanently cancel) the in-person 369th Commencement and alumni reunion activities (see page 14 and harvardmag.com/comm-postponed-20). The annual weeklong celebration of Harvard’s students and its worldwide community draws tens of thousands of people to campus—including a crowd, soon-to-be-graduates among them, of 30,000-plus for the Morning Exercises in Tercentenary Theatre—along with faculty members and a host of guest speakers. But not this year.

“No virtual gathering can possibly match the splendor of our usual festivities,” President Lawrence S. Bacow wrote, “but we will come together online on Thursday, May 28, to award degrees so that everyone will graduate as expected. Each school at Harvard will also host its own special online event and afterwards deliver diplomas through the mail.” Harvard Magazine will cover these virtual Commencement activities (visit www.harvardmagazine.com), and, of course, the news and events of the real-time, real-people, exercises and reunions, when rescheduled. In the meantime, we might all stand and applaud, in spirit, the endeavors—now and in the future—of the University’s growing community.

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