

Dear Graduates, Class of 2020,

It is a distinct honor to congratulate each one of you as a graduate of our Department, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and NC State University. **Well done!** This is a great accomplishment that represents an exceptional amount of work, commitment, and hopefully many good memories and experiences. We are proud to share this achievement with you.

Congratulations to parents, guardians, partners, extended family members, friends and supporters of our students. We celebrate all that you have done to sustain and encourage your student. It takes a team effort within the university, within the home and within the community to provide the best opportunity for each student to succeed according to their passions, interests and gifts. Thank you for your role.

Congratulations to the faculty, staff and NC State community for all you have done and invested to enable this celebration in 2020. Thank you for the depth of knowledge, linked with care and commitment that you all bring so faithfully.

Graduates – you are graduating in a very significant time. The whole world will look back at this period as a milestone of change. The CLASS of 2020 emerges from within a world-wide pandemic. You did not finish your classes like you imagined, we are not celebrating as a community like we planned, and some aspirations will not proceed as we hoped. Some in our community have tasted sadness and uncertainty. Yet, you are uniquely prepared for such a time as this. The things that lie ahead present a unique opportunity to lead, based on the skills and knowledge you gained at NC State and the person you have become. Your time here has created the foundation you need to walk forward in leadership and wisdom. Each one of you has a distinct and powerful contribution to make to our shared future. Your impact is already felt. You have given us great reason to celebrate, and your achievement today is of great encouragement to us all. In light of the current crises, may your values be deeply rooted as you show greater resilience, lead forward with more commitment, and show deeper care for your loved ones, your communities and for our shared world.

Thank you for the diversity of ways you have contributed to the department. It is our delight to celebrate this accomplishment with you. We hope we can celebrate face-to-face when the time is right, but that does not take away from the joy that is ours today – celebrating you as a graduate of the Class of 2020.

Sincerely,



Frank J. Louws  
Department Head and Professor, Horticultural Science