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April 20, 2020

Dear Biology Department Graduate:

On behalf of the faculty and staff in the Department of Biology, let me express our congratulations on the occasion of your graduation. You are graduating during a tumultuous time that has made some of the traditional modes of celebration impossible. Nevertheless, we acknowledge and cheer this significant accomplishment.

You are leaving the university at an unprecedented time and moving into a world that will be challenging. However, there are opportunities that were unimagined when you started your degree just a few years ago. Our goal has been to provide you the best possible environment to study the Creation with excellent peers and from distinguished faculty who care about you and your long-term success. Our hope is that we have prepared you intellectually, morally, and spiritually to confront today's novel challenges and embrace opportunities.

In addition, we hope that, beginning in our 100-level courses and culminating in capstone experiences, we have taught you core values and practices that will make you valued members of your personal, church, and professional communities. These values include intellectual honesty and humility, care for others and the Creation, passion for learning, joy in discovery, and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. As you move on from our BYU and department community, we hope that you will cultivate practices of openness to those with differing opinions, humility toward your own capacities, and a firm commitment to living gospel values.

In Samoa, a place that I have visited with several of the 2020 graduates, there is a traditional proverb: *E pala le ma'a, ae le pala le tala*. The direct translation is that the rocks will weather away, but the story remains. The well-deserved physical emblems of what you have done here are ephemeral, including diploma, transcripts, and awards. What will be left behind is the personal story of what you have accomplished—perseverance in trial, growth through deliberate effort, working together with others to achieve higher goals, and commitment to the vision that we can and should align temporal and spiritual learning. Part of your story should include the shared sacrifice of your family, your instructors, and the Church to bring you to this point. That investment yields dividends as you go forward to serve others.

We pray that you will remember with fondness your time spent with us in the Department of Biology and at Brigham Young University. We have full faith that you will represent our department, college, university, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints with honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Richard A. Gill", written in a cursive style.

Richard A. Gill
Chair, Department of Biology