



Dear PDBio and Biophysics Graduates,

Congratulations on completing your degree! While we aren't able to hold traditional graduation ceremonies, I hope all of you are able to find a way to celebrate your graduation with family and friends. I am reminded of my own BYU graduation nearly 30 years ago when 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 know if and where we would be attending graduate school. Like many of you over the past year, I submitted assignments remotely...but in my case, via USPS! I did graduate from BYU without fanfare, and was accepted into a graduate program. 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!

To the 2020 graduates, I wrote, "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!*" Now, with a return to normalcy visible in the not-so-distant future, take a moment to reflect on your BYU experience. Not just this past year of challenges, but on its entirety. Ask yourself, "What were the two or three experiences that I wouldn't trade for anything?" Many of you worked in research labs on campus, or as TAs in the classroom. Maybe these are the memories you cherish. Maybe you remember making BYU better by helping a friend or classmate. Whatever your memories, I am confident that your experiences here have helped shape your very bright futures. As you reminisce on those experiences, take a moment to express gratitude to our Creator, and hold onto that feeling of happiness that is your BYU experience.

As the final semester of your BYU experience ends, please celebrate your graduation with family and friends. If you are looking at a "summer of uncertainty" ahead, embrace it with 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 encourage you to regularly reach back to faculty who impacted your education and your 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 year of Covid! Thank you for being part of our BYU community, and once again, congratulations!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael R. Stark".

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