May 28, 2020

Dear Members of the UMass Boston Community,

As this extraordinary academic year concludes, allow me to commend the UMass Boston community for its commitment and ingenuity during these tumultuous times and extend heartfelt congratulations to the 3,800 undergraduate and graduate students set to earn their degrees.

Circumstances are preventing UMass Boston’s graduates from gathering in commencement exercises this week but do not diminish the significance of their accomplishments or limit the impact our Beacons will have on the world.

On February 10, I had the honor of a lifetime in being elected chancellor of UMass Boston, and shortly thereafter I returned to Los Angeles to complete my final semester as dean of UCLA’s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies.

Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has swept across the world, wreaking terrible loss of life, leaving untold suffering and economic mayhem in its wake, and redefining the contours of our lives.

Throughout this period, the safety and well-being of all members of the UMass Boston community have been a constant concern for me. I have maintained close communication with President Meehan, Interim Chancellor Newman, and other UMass chancellors and officials, and will continue to be involved and engaged until I formally take office on August 1. I have been deeply impressed by Dr. Newman’s leadership during these painful days and by the way the UMass Boston community has joined together to preserve its distinguished academic programs and advance important research and service projects. By every measure, our faculty, students, staff, and administrators have risen to the occasion.
These are days that few among us could have imagined, but as distressing as they are, we know that better days lie ahead. We also know that the best way to realize those days is to work together, emphasizing, as UMass Boston always has, the paramount importance of reason, collaboration, and compassion. I look forward to being with you soon and joining you in the journey to our brighter future.

Thinking back on how my own life was transformed by public higher education, I offer several thoughts for our graduating Beacons.

Your graduation from UMass Boston marks the completion of a rigorous cycle of academic training and practice and will launch you on a new journey full of possibilities and potential. But today, new beginnings unfold in a climate of real uncertainty. As you face new challenges and struggles, know that you always will have the Beacon family to come back to. We are all in this together. As you pursue your dreams beyond UMass Boston, keep in mind the eternal words of Maya Angelou: “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” I wish you happiness and success as you take the next steps in your lives and careers. This world needs your energy, enthusiasm and commitment. Graduates of the Class of 2020, the world needs healing—go out there and heal the world!

Stay Safe and Stay Strong.

Marcelo Suárez-Orozco
Chancellor-elect
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