

June 14, 2020

Hello Graduates of the Class of 2020,

I am sending you this video to congratulate you on receiving a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations. Although an in-person ceremony will have to wait for a future time, I did not want this day to pass without acknowledging your achievement. I hope that, wherever you are in the world, you are healthy, safe, and in the company of family or friends who can celebrate with you.

Throughout your time here, you have been focused on the world outside of America's borders: learning the history, culture, and language of other countries; living and studying abroad; examining global institutions to understand what they can and cannot do; comparing different systems of governance; and thinking about their implications for human rights and human well-being. This kind of interdisciplinary, international, and comparative perspective is crucial for confronting the kinds of challenges we face now and in the future, including a global pandemic, climate change, violence within and between countries, and vast inequalities in people's welfare and life opportunities.

Your graduation also comes at a time that has focused attention on problems within the United States. Recent murders of Black Americans by police and vigilantes have laid bare longstanding problems of racism and racial injustice in our society. These killings came in the midst of a devastating pandemic that has exposed failures of American political institutions and magnified inequalities of race and wealth.

These events remind us that many of the phenomena you studied while majoring in IR – racial and ethnic conflict, protest and repression, democratic backsliding – are not just things that happen in other countries. I firmly believe that the global perspective you developed here at Stanford will be invaluable in thinking about how this country moves forward.

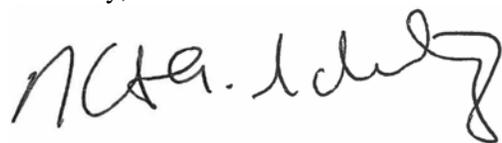
Although a difficult job market may make you feel otherwise, the world needs you right now. It will need you to help solve the problems facing our country, and it will need you to be part of the conversation about how to re-engage the world once the pandemic has passed. That is a daunting charge, but one that I hope you embrace.

Not necessarily today, however. Today, I hope you get a chance to rest, celebrate, and enjoy the sense of accomplishment.

Please know that you leave Stanford with the best wishes and high hopes of the Program in International Relations, its faculty and staff, as well as of the faculty and staff across the campus and at our overseas centers who contributed to your education. Although we are not handing out diplomas right now, please keep an eye on your mail in the coming days for a small gift that we hope will symbolize your commitment to international relations now and in the future.

Congratulations, Class of 2020!

Sincerely,



Kenneth A. Schultz  
Professor of Political Science  
Director, Program in International Relations\