

Most Significant Lessons Learned

“Change is constant. There is no right way to do something.”

“Patience, understanding and empathy - this has been really hard for all of our grads.”

“We needed more time to plan our virtual convocation.”

“Some things are going to be "As good as it gets". Let some things go, you can't please everyone.”

“Students first always.”

“Communication style and strategies during stressful times need to adapt for better comprehension.”

“That we can pivot and make a new plan very quickly when we need to!”

“Thankfulness - as much as so many things felt "taken away" it helped me realize how much I have always had to be thankful for.”

“1) Ask for help, 2) Reach out to other colleagues, 3) Plan Zoom (virtual) Happy Hours with friends to de-stress.”

“Always have contingency plans.”

“The student experience is the most important aspect of Commencement. Items may have to be redone after the fact to ensure happy graduates.”

“Students always come first and they deserve to be recognized.”

“The most significant lesson is that during times of crisis, you need to learn how to effectively communicate your thoughts and ideas. People are chronically stressed and sometimes it gets harder to process information.”

“Learning to ask for help was crucial this semester. I had to adjust, learn and ask for as much help I could.”

“Value of teamwork and support from colleagues.”

“Virtual Convocations need to focus on the students, not speakers.”

“The importance of relationships, mental health and conversations.”

“Playbooks are a planners best friend.”

“How much the entire campus valued and looked forward to commencement.”

“I really thrive off of my interactions from my students.”

“It is essential to remain present and fully engaged with your team while working remotely.”

“The importance to listen and not jump to conclusions or make big decisions quickly. It's okay to talk it out and listen to all groups involved.”

“Adapting and changing on a dime.”

“We're capable of anything!”

“How quickly our large university was able to pivot from in-person to exclusively online learning.”

“My University team is very good in a crisis.”

“Unfortunately, many of those in leadership roles were not equipped with the skills to deal with a pandemic.”

“That you need to have leadership that supports you.”

“It is critical to keep communicating with each other.”

“Distill down your message to what really matters, and approach the content from how the recipient would most like to receive it.”

“Doing something for your students no matter how small or big means a lot to the graduates!”

“The importance of flexibility, resiliency and the strength in a network and team with common goals.”

“Flexibility is key with an ever changing climate.”

“What's most important.”

“That we can provide an engaging virtual experience if an in-person ceremony is not an option.”

“Questions to ask vendors supplying products that are in high demand.”

“To expect the unexpected.”

“Persevere and find as well as use the silver linings.”

“Virtual ceremonies are complicated and largely uncharted territory.”

“What is most important to our various audiences.”

“Communication is difficult between people/offices on a good day, and even more challenging now. Take a breath, take a moment, and do not react before you analyze and understand.”

“Be ready for anything; be comfortable with ambiguity; be comfortable with rapid change.”

“Be prepared for anything.”

“Stay flexible and rely upon colleagues who can help.”

“Rise to challenges and have patience and compassion for others, as we do not know what others are going through physically and mentally.”

“Not everyone loves change.”

“Patience and be flexible.”

“Flexibility and communication are key!”

“How much we can learn from each other! I followed the posts and gleaned from the expertise of others on NAACO. Thank you!”

“We're all figuring it out and it's important to rely on our networks but also give ourselves a bit of a break if things aren't exactly perfect.”

“How much and how quickly things can be re-imagined/new plans executed when circumstances require it, thanks to colleagues pulling together.”

“Patience.”

“Making the decision early in March to pivot online was key to a successful commencement. We are glad we trusted our instincts and that our university listened to our recommendations.”

“The importance of planning a Virtual Commencement that would come as close as possible to an in person recognition of the graduates.”

“How to do work during a pandemic when experiencing loss.”

“Flexibility, and a whole new way of planning events.”

“Work from home operations should be thought through and prepared ahead of time for "just in case" situations.”

“How much we can accomplish working from home.”

“How to be effective and efficient while working remotely.”

“You can never be too flexible.”

“How much an in-person commencement means to our graduates and their families.”

“To be fluid and flexible!!”

“We made some last minute decisions for our virtual ceremony that required a lot of hours and creativity but the thank you's from families made it all so worthwhile!”

“No matter how many times you stress you are not holding a commencement (because students don't want a virtual one) almost everyone, including your leadership, insists on calling it a commencement.”

“Communication is key.”

“How well our institution was able to quickly pivot from online instruction to remote.”

“Several people across campus came together to make things happen.”

“The realization that after decades of formal/traditional events, we are moving quickly towards more virtual, live-streamed, zoom, fb live events. The next generation will hardly notice if traditional items are not presented/performed in-person!”

“Redundancy for technology and staff needs to be a part of virtual planning.”

“Tenacity and the willingness to change and be fluid are extremely important, especially now.”

“To embrace ambiguity and uncertainty.”

“There's no playbook. Value each other's feedback.”

“Surround yourself with people that can execute ideas quickly.”

“That it isn't necessarily over yet....don't throw away everything we just learned.”

“Be flexible.”

“That I can still learn and grow, no matter how long I've been in the business of creating moments that matter.”

“People need to remain flexible and learn to adapt.”

“Communicate, communicate, communicate! Even if you have nothing new to say, say something!”

“Understanding and listening to what students want as opposed to what we think they want as it related to the virtual and in-person experiences.”

“Speaking up to make sure the administration and others who don't typically work on commencement to make sure they know what is important and vital to your ceremony/celebration.”

“That we need to be prepared to produce events virtually, as well as in person.”

“Stay open to possibilities and share the load with colleagues.”

“The benefit to learning from colleagues.”

“The moments we create are what people need in difficult times.”

“Simplicity is key. Our reporting needs an overhaul. Our timelines are too tight for the amount of graduates we process. Communication with faculty needs improvement.”

“Over communicate with event participants.”

“People still appreciate a celebration, even if it looks different. Celebrating is important!”