Thank you for joining us this morning.

This holiday season, in particular, has provided a much needed moment of reflection. And, while there were many uncertainties in 2020, the year did bring into focus that which is certain.

For example, we know the hands-on “Michigan Tech Experience” is a hallmark of our institution, but to have that dampened this past semester due to COVID restrictions only amplified its importance.

We know our faculty and staff are committed to student success, but to see their remarkable efforts to deliver the very best educational experience possible, within the constraints provided, brought even greater certainty as to their commitment.

We know that Michigan Tech’s core value of community carried the university and our local area through difficult times in the past, such as the Father’s Day flood. Once again, we see just how important it is for us to all work together. The success of Tech during this past semester has been underpinned by collaboration and community. That is for certain.
And finally, although these are indeed stressful times for all, understanding, mutual respect and might I say, kindness, continues to be a special aspect of Michigan Tech. Without that, where would we be...and who would we be?

Just last week the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, also known as FIRE, reaffirmed Michigan Tech’s “green” rating for policies and actions protecting free speech on campus. I point out that only 56 universities in the country received a “green” rating and Michigan Tech continues to be the only university in Michigan.

While we strongly support free speech on campus, Michigan Tech does not condone hate speech, acts of violence, hatred, and racism. From ablesim and anti-semitism to white supremacy and xenophobia, we do not welcome such behavior on our campus. This directly opposes our work in creating a just, equitable and diverse community of students and scholars.

I am proud of the many things our faculty and staff have accomplished together to create a welcoming environment for our employees and students. But, we all know, the job is not complete.

And today, I am pleased to formally introduce Michigan Tech’s new Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Wayne M. Gersie. Wayne joins us from Penn State, where he led diversity efforts in the College of Engineering and the Applied Research Lab. Over the next few months, Dr. Gersie will be developing the diversity and inclusion framework for Michigan Tech. I hope you all will support him, and join him, as he assumes this important leadership position for our university.
To our December 2020 graduates, I looked forward to shaking your hand in congratulations and giving you your diploma tomorrow. This is one of the gatherings we will deeply miss due to the pandemic. So, let me say congratulations to all and we can’t wait to see the impact you will have on our world with your degree from Michigan Tech.

And finally, it is with mixed emotions that we also congratulate Dr. Bonnie Gorman, our Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, as she concludes a 25 year career at Michigan Tech and moves on to retirement. Bonnie, thank you for your remarkable contributions to Michigan Tech over this time. Your unfailing commitment to the students of Michigan Tech has inspired us all. Best wishes on your next adventure.

In conclusion, to all of you this holiday season...may all good things come your way.