April 8, 2020

Dear Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate Students,

As you continue to juggle your day-to-day realities and your graduate studies at Meredith, please know how very impressed I am with your commitment to learning and succeeding. I know the semester is not ending the way you hoped (for any of us), but your strength in getting through this messy time is admirable.

I wanted to share, briefly, some research by Dr. Carol Dweck, psychologist at Stanford, whose work on fixed versus growth mindsets has helped me think about these days in a more positive way. Her research shows that those who approach key elements of their lives with a fixed mindset—that most things (including intelligence) are set and essentially immutable—are more likely to falter when facing a real challenge. On the other hand, those with a growth mindset—that change is possible, problems solvable, and learning exciting—flourish in difficult times even when facing unanticipated obstacles. In short, they thrive when new challenges come along—provided they approach problems as learning opportunities, put in the effort and hard work to resolve the problems, devise alternative strategies for learning and resolving problems, and appreciate feedback.

I hope you will consider these two mindsets (and, yes, we all have both) and consider which best serves you as you work to complete your graduate coursework this semester. As part of this hard work, I hope you are also in contact with your faculty and peers—both great resources for developing or favoring that way of rethinking, getting feedback, and moving toward the growth mindset.

As we move forward, know also that we have never needed advanced learners and practitioners more than we will as we emerge from this pandemic. Indeed, I am convinced we have never needed stronger healthcare leaders, nutritionists and other scientists, technologists, business leaders and entrepreneurs, psychologists, teachers, writers, legal advisors, artists, and more—all of which require at least a bachelor’s degree and, for the true leadership we need, advanced degrees.

You will be so ready to lead and help us recover. And we are grateful.

President Jo Allen, ’80