

## **Commencement Innovations**

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To *walk* in a commencement ceremony, wearing one's regalia, and throwing one's graduation cap in the air are all part of the culmination of the hard work required to earn a college degree. In the midst of a global pandemic, our 2020 graduates had to forego an in-person celebration with friends, proud families, and faculty members. The Applied math department wanted to find a way to offer a *live* celebration, to supplement Illinois Tech's beautiful asynchronous virtual commencement ceremony.

With the help of Victoria Belotti, our student organizer par-excellence, and contributions from multiple fellow faculty members, we developed a virtual reception on Zoom complete with graduation music, speeches from our chair and the directors of undergraduate and graduate studies and an innovative video speech from graduate Joanna Czopek. Each of our 27 graduates from our bachelor's, master's, and doctorate programs were honored with individually curated pictures and notes. Post-reception, our graduates and their guests congregated in smaller virtual rooms with faculty and fellow students.

As the pandemic-based restrictions continued to affect commencement plans this year, we celebrated our 2021 graduates in a similar live virtual Zoom celebration. We look forward to a return to in-person celebrations in 2022!

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