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From the President

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

In May I visited with my parents for the first time since January 2020. The wait was excruciating, but the reunion was both monumental and routine in the best of ways. It was exhilarating to see them and also so normal to simply enjoy a meal together and continue the conversation we have been having for decades. The fact that they seemed to find the fountain of youth during the pandemic while I was aging in dog years? That's for another time...

Later in May, we celebrated the graduation of 519 members of the Colby Class of 2021. Miller Lawn was filled with families and friends and the endless smiles of our remarkable graduating seniors. For the first time in 15 months, I was certain they were smiling—because I could finally see their beautiful faces. The masks were off, and I shook hands with each student, until then a forbidden act. It was both monumental and routine in the best of ways.

For so many of us, the hunger for the routine through this pandemic has been insatiable. We have been imagining our children learning in classrooms again instead of over Zoom. We could envision grocery store visits that weren't anxiety-producing ventures and eagerly awaited nourishing visits with family and friends. We longed to mark the important moments in life, to celebrate accomplishments, to engage in the rituals that enrich us and connect us to our histories and traditions. We were devastated when we could not attend to loved ones at their times of greatest need.

Our routines, it turns out, are monumental.

The evidence of this was present for me every day on our campus for the past year. Never a moment passed when I wasn't grateful for the more than 2,000 students attending class every day, researching in the libraries and laboratories, living in residence halls, performing in theatrical productions, training and competing in athletics. My pride in our faculty, which is always high, reached levels I could never have imagined. They didn't follow their colleagues at other top universities and colleges who chose not to return to the classroom this year. They provided a Colby education at its very best. And our staff? Tireless and dedicated doesn't begin to describe the commitment, flexibility, and talent of the folks who form the backbone of this community.

The Colby team made this year seem almost ordinary—and that turned out to be truly extraordinary.

At Colby, we don't scan the horizon of higher education and play follow the leader. We chart our own course, knowing at every turn that our mission and purpose must guide us. That was how everyone in this community responded to the pandemic, and the results were evident in the smiles of our students on commencement day.

Treasuring the ordinary. That is a gift from this difficult time that I never want to return.

David A. Greene