Hello University of Chicago!

As we celebrate the end of an unprecedented quarter, I want to take a moment and thank each of you for your extraordinary effort.

The world has asked a lot of you—from living through the upheaval of a global pandemic to the painful process of dissent and social change. People around the world are asking ourselves what justice requires, and who we want to be moving forward. And yet, because of you and your persistence, our community has been able to unite around each other and prove our collective commitment to academic excellence, rigorous inquiry, and diversity and inclusion.

From what I’ve seen this quarter, I am confident that the students, instructors, researchers, and staff who helped uphold UChicago’s highest vision of itself through these difficult moments will continue to answer the call as we move forward.

I’m proud of how each member of our community rose to the daily challenge of living through a global health crisis, coming together to rapidly transition to remote teaching and learning, working, and researching.

To our Students: You remained focused and made academic progress despite the significant disruption to your day-to-day lives. I’ve been inspired by your courage, creativity, and resilience as you persisted in your educational pursuit and provided a support system for each other. Thank you for demonstrating, in the finest ways possible, what it means to be a UChicago student.

To our Instructors, including faculty, other academic appointees, and graduate students: Many of you have put in long hours and sacrificed weekends while taking on additional responsibilities at home. You quickly came up to speed on best practices for remote learning and teaching, and continued to innovate to help your students receive the distinctive, quality education we are known for. Thank you for showing what it means to step up, adapt, and lead in an uncertain situation.

To our Research Community, including faculty, postdocs, students, other academic appointees, and staff: I know it is wrenching to not have access to all the facilities crucial for your research—the library, the core facilities, your lab, your studio, your office. Though necessary, it went against our best instincts as scholars. Thank you for your flexibility and also for your ingenuity, as many of you pivoted to address COVID-19 and work toward breakthroughs that could change the world.

To our Staff: Continuing the business of our University across distance presented new challenges, and I’m grateful for how you continued to collaborate and provide support for everything from technology to academics. Thank you for positively addressing the relentless challenges, enduring
never-ending Zoom meetings, and striving to maintain the critical sense of community that is so vital to our institution.

To the team at UCMC: From the very beginning, you displayed heroic efforts to care for people across our city and help them recover from COVID-19. You embraced the kind of public health leadership and partnership with our government and communities that is making a difference in saving lives and flattening the curve. Thank you for truly being at the forefront in everything you do.

We have all had to adjust to the new normal. Like you, I miss seeing my friends and colleagues on campus. But I take solace in the fact that our culture of free debate and rigorous inquiry continues to thrive, even if it is over Zoom instead of on the quad.

Your compassion—not just for our students and each other but also our neighbors on the South Side—shows that our community remains vibrant and strong even while physically distant.

It has not been easy. But I am confident that our University community will emerge from this moment stronger and even more committed to the transformative education and field-defining research that make us who we are.

Above all, I want you to know my appreciation for you. Know that your contributions under these extraordinary circumstances are recognized and celebrated by me and this community we have chosen together.