Schools closing for in-person instruction for the remainder of the 2019–2020 school year was not the ending that our high school seniors anticipated. We are proud of the achievements made by the Class of 2020 and should not allow the challenges our world is facing to diminish their accomplishments. In light of this, Governor Henry McMaster and State Superintendent Molly Spearman encourage all schools to hold innovative graduation ceremonies and celebrations that allow students, families, and educators to celebrate student success.

Best Practices for Face-to-Face Recognition
When planning face-to-face recognition or graduation activities, refer to the latest guidance from the Department of Health and Environmental Control and the guidance on mass gatherings from the Centers for Disease Control. Multiple methods of communicating and enforcing social distancing measures should be considered during planning and execution.

A hybrid of in-person and virtual recognitions can be combined to offer graduates and their families a memorable, lasting experience.

Creative Ideas for Socially Distant In-Person Recognition
The SCDE recommends the following venues that allow for socially distant in-person ceremonies:
- Outdoor stadiums (high school or college sports fields);
- Large outdoor venues (*amphitheaters* or similar music venues);
- Large gymnasiums;
- Drive-in movie theatres; or
- Indoor auditoriums or gymnasiums for individualized graduation ceremonies.

When considering venues for in-person recognition. It is important to take into account:
- Spaces large enough to maintain six feet of social distance. This requires approximately 36 square feet per person.
- The number and size of the venue's entry and exit points.
- The ability to place sanitization stations.
- The number of restroom facilities available for guests.
- Ensuring the stage or space where students will be recognized is large enough to accommodate social distancing.
- How diplomas are received by the student. The SCDE does not recommend person-to-person contact.

Schools and districts should strongly discourage the in-person attendance of any guests that are exhibiting any signs of illness, are immunocompromised, or that are among populations identified by the CDC as high-risk for illness.

Innovative in-person ceremony practices and suggestions for consideration submitted by South Carolina schools and districts:
- Offer photos in graduation regalia taken by district photographer by appointment.
- Bring in and dismiss students and families in shifts to minimize person-to-person contact.
- Limit the number of guests to two per student.
- Live stream or record ceremonies so family members can participate or view later.
- Hold drive-through or drive-in graduation ceremonies.
  - Coordinate with local law enforcement office for traffic control.
  - Students in cars parade to graduation site.
  - Staff members stationed along route in graduation regalia.
  - Posters or regalia for each student posted along route.
  - Designated space for conferral of diploma, moving of tassels, and photos.
  - Set up a big screen so cars in parking lot can watch the action.
  - Social media or online live screenings of the diploma conferral for the community.

Creative Ideas for Virtual Recognition
- Create a virtual ceremony
  - Music featuring seniors in band or choir;
  - Pre-record student and administrator commencement speeches;
  - Compile short video messages, photo slideshow, or compilation of senior photos, quotes, and voiceover from each graduate and/or their family;
  - Compile pre-recorded videos of each graduate walking the stage and receiving diploma in graduation regalia; and/or
  - Include Pomp and Circumstance.
- Deliver recognition care packages to seniors. These could include yard signs, tee shirts, videos, awards, or keepsake framed caps and gowns.

The SCDE thanks the school and district leaders who shared some of their creative thinking about recognizing our future graduates in the Class of 2020.

South Carolina School Districts Contributing Ideas to this Document:
- Abbeville;
- Anderson Three;
- Anderson Four;
- Charleston;
- Charter Institute at Erskine;
- Greenville;
- Greenwood 51;
- Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities;
- Jasper;
- Lexington Two;
- Marlboro;
- Newberry;
- Oconee;
- Richland Two; and
- York Two.