March 12, 2020
Message to May 2020 graduates:

With the university’s recent announcement about modified academic operations for the next several weeks, we in the Office of Graduate Studies and Research wanted to update you on what this means for your progress toward completing your defense and your degree and to assure you of our support. We will make every effort we can to ensure these operational changes do not negatively impact your progress toward graduation. Your wellbeing and the wellbeing of our entire community is our greatest concern and supporting you in these unusual circumstances is one of our highest priorities.

As you will learn from a follow up message coming from Dean Torczon later today, the staff in the OGSR will be telecommuting and Stetson House will not be open, effective Monday, March 16, 2020 through at least April 3, 2020. This message is intended to lay out what this means for you and the upcoming defenses and thesis/dissertation deadlines that approach.

Defenses scheduled during the period of modified academic operations (March 16 – at least April 3):
The Graduate Arts & Sciences Catalog stipulates that students defending the thesis or dissertation must be on campus for the defense. We will grant an exception to this rule during this period of time. Students may defend from off campus via Skype, Zoom, or other remote means during this time. If the university continues to operate via remote instruction beyond April 3, we will extend this exemption as needed.

Forms and signatures:
The OGSR typically requires original signatures on official forms which means signed copies need to be dropped off or mailed to the OGSR in Stetson House. With Stetson House staff working remotely, we will grant an exception to this rule. While Stetson House remains closed, the OGSR will accept scanned copies of forms with signatures submitted via a W&M email address. We urge you to keep copies of all forms for your own records.

Questions:
Vicki Thompson Dopp will, as always, be available to you via email and phone to help you through the thesis/dissertation submission hoops. Contact her with questions about forms, the ProQuest ETD, and the submission process at any time. Sarah Glosson is also available by email.

We are committed to working with you to ensure you are able to complete your defense and final paperwork for the degree. We ask that you please help us to help you: communicate with us promptly about any changes in your plans; be proactive and educate yourself in advance about the upcoming deadlines. Work closely with your advisor(s) and members of your defense examination committee to arrive at a feasible plan for your defense examination.

Virginia Torczon
Dean of Graduate Studies and Research