Since their first step into their academic career, first-generation students aimed for a dream that not only represents a milestone for themselves but for their parents who have not obtained a college degree — a college diploma.

For low-income families, a well-endowed school that provides a high-quality education is often one of the things that fall out of reach. Any less than that sets first-generation students back in their path to their college degree.

According to a 2001 study by the National Center for Education Statistics, about 54% of students whose parents have completed high school enrolled in college immediately after graduation, while only 36% of students whose parents had less than a high school diploma did the same.

With that gap set between those two groups of students, it’s not hard to find other factors that hinder their academic progress.

Whether it is the lack of college readiness, financial and family support, racial disparity and low academic self-esteem, first-generation students have overcome many obstacles to become today’s graduates.

Despite plans of a traditional ceremony down the road, their victory won’t feel the same.

CONGRATULATIONS SOCIOLOGY GRADUATES!

As we stand in this shining moment of your accomplishment, we recognize this important milestone and acknowledge all the sacrifices that you and your families have made to get here. We are proud of you and we celebrate the positive force for good in this world that we know you will be.

Your Sociology faculty
Family: Starting a legacy for future generations

Despite the significance of a nifty sheet of paper with their name and the title of their degree on it, the act of receiving is on a whole different level.

It’s the recognition and well-deserved feeling of pride as their family, friends and fellow classmates cheer them on when they walk across the stage.

As they turn their cheek to take their iconic “Look at me! I’m next to the president and dean of my college” picture, it’s at that moment that they know they have set a path for future familial generations to come.

Now, with their laptop screen slowly displaying social media pictures of their classmates in virtual transitions, the COVID-19 pandemic took their moment to shine away. All those years of beating the odds disappear into thin air, leaving graduates in the dark.

Considering our current circumstances of social distancing, to some students it might seem like an in-person ceremony isn’t necessary.

With everything on the Titan Degree Audit said and done and a degree in hand, what’s the point of going back to campus for a walk that doesn’t last more than five minutes?

For one, those few minutes of glory might be the first-ever for family members who had never been given the chance to advance in a leveled-playing field and go to college.

And even when given the chance, the obstacles don’t stop after high school graduation.

Due to the lack of college readiness, resources and guidance that unfortunately can’t be provided by their parents, first-generation students are often clueless when it comes to applying to the college of their choice, financial aid and choosing their field of study.

Rather than graduating in the traditional four years — that’s shamelessly promoted by many college institutions — 90% of low-income, first-generation college students don’t graduate within that projection. Instead, this overwhelming majority of graduates in more than six years.

More than six years of working to pay off tuition, nights of covering shifts and cramming study material feel as if they got compiled together into a social media post, only to receive less than 100 likes.

Maybe students can live without an in-person graduation; the world won’t explode due to canceled commencements.

But, a multi-generation graduate would never truly understand the importance of college graduation for a first-generation student.

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But, a multi-generation graduate would never truly understand the importance of college graduation for a first-generation student.
Graduating college and high school seniors around the country are mourning the loss — or in some cases, postponement? — of in-person commencement activities to celebrate their noteworthy accomplishments. It’s unlikely that any student could have predicted, or would have wished that their final semester would end this way. After years of hard work, these students deserve the same amount of recognition as those who came before them.

An online version of graduation is simply not the same. There is no way a virtual presentation can replace a commencement where family and friends can gather together and celebrate as their loved one physically walks across the stage to be handed their hard-earned diploma.

Additionally, at this given time, there is no way an in-person ceremony can safely or responsibly be held. Schools around the nation have attempted variations of this, including ceremonies with a drive-in audience, home-delivered diplomas or even ceremonies with graduates spaced six feet apart.

Not only are many of these options dangerous, and in some cases illegal, but they are only temporary solutions that fail to provide graduates with what they truly deserve, especially after already losing so much of what was hoped for or expected to close out their final semester.

Any option that can fully replace the commencement ceremonies is dangerous and possibly illegal. This has led many high schools, colleges and universities, including Cal State Fullerton, to opt for online commencements as a temporary solution with the intent to hold a fully in-person ceremony once it is safe to do so. This decision makes the best of the current situation and ensures that graduates will receive the full extent of celebration and recognition they deserve while keeping faculty, students and loved ones safe. Although online commencements are not ideal, they are the most prudent and honoring option right now.

The CSUF Commencement Team has worked hard to ensure that the online ceremony honors and highlights each student. Thankfully, this hard work has not overshadowed the importance and value of an in-person ceremony and has remained a value for CSUF.

While it is hard to predict when hundreds of people will be able to safely gather once more, it is pivotal to hold an in-person ceremony at some point so as to not let down graduates.

There are still many things that graduating students have lost in the midst of this. This sadness is merited and shared by thousands of students around the country. For now, graduates should celebrate to the best of their ability with friends and family either virtually or with those already in their home. Making the best of each situation is all that can be done at this time.

Still, it is also important to recognize and confront this real feeling of loss. Even if an in-person commencement ceremony isn’t fully lost, club activities, friendships, classes and additional graduate activities have been lost or altered. Identifying this hurt and allowing oneself to mourn is valid and important.

The joy that comes with commencement is now displaced by loss and grief.
The Daily Titan proudly presents:

GRAD
GRAMS 2020
**LESLIE KLUKAS**  
College of Communications  
Congratulations! You managed to overcome all the obstacles placed on your path with grace. I admire your resilience and today you are reaping the rewards from your hard work and dedication. Always remember my daughter “It’s how the race is won, that matters.” A wonderful journey lies ahead. I’m proud and honored to be your mother.

Love,  
Mom

**LESLIE KLUKAS**  
College of Communications  
Congratulations! You managed to overcome all the obstacles placed on your path with grace. I admire your resilience and today you are reaping the rewards from your hard work and dedication. Always remember my daughter “It’s how the race is won, that matters.” A wonderful journey lies ahead. I’m proud and honored to be your mother.

Love,  
Mom

**MICHAEL L. FELDMAN**  
College of Engineering and Computer Science  
Michael~ What an amazing and wonderful accomplishment to be graduating from College! Your hard work and dedication has now earned you your greatest Achievement, proving that whatever you set your mind on not only will you accomplish it, but you will do so with honors! Your family and I couldn’t be more proud! Best of luck as you take the next step towards what promises to be a very bright future!  
❤ Mom & Family

**MICHAE L L. FELDMAN**  
College of Engineering and Computer Science  
Michael~ What an amazing and wonderful accomplishment to be graduating from College! Your hard work and dedication has now earned you your greatest Achievement, proving that whatever you set your mind on not only will you accomplish it, but you will do so with honors! Your family and I couldn’t be more proud! Best of luck as you take the next step towards what promises to be a very bright future!  
❤ Mom & Family

**MEGAN AVILA**  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Megan, you did it!  
Congratulations on your amazing achievements! May God bless you! We’re so proud of you!!  
Lots of love,  
The Urubio Familia

**MEGAN AVILA**  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Megan, you did it!  
Congratulations on your amazing achievements! May God bless you! We’re so proud of you!!  
Lots of love,  
The Urubio Familia

**AKANI PASIGAN**  
College of Health and Human Development  
Hey beautiful! I’m so proud of you for getting that degree! You put in so much work and time that you not only got through college, you crushed it. It has been such an honor to watch you thrive during our time together at Fullerton College and Cal State Fullerton, and I can’t wait to watch you get your master’s degree and achieve every dream of yours. No matter what, I will always be by your side, loving and supporting you through it all. Congratulations baby, I love you. Clear Eyes, Full Hearts.  
- Jordan Alexander

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- Jordan Alexander

**ALEXANDRIA AGUILAR**  
College of The Arts  
Love and Congratulations to Alexandria Aguilar on your graduation with a BA in Theater Arts. You will always be a star in our sky and a leading lady in our hearts. The curtain is rising on whatever brilliant future you choose!  
Love,  
Grandma & Pop Pop

**ALEXANDRIA AGUILAR**  
College of The Arts  
Love and Congratulations to Alexandria Aguilar on your graduation with a BA in Theater Arts. You will always be a star in our sky and a leading lady in our hearts. The curtain is rising on whatever brilliant future you choose!  
Love,  
Grandma & Pop Pop

**ALEX I. FELDMAN**  
College of Engineering and Computer Science  
Alex~ Congratulations on your outstanding achievement and well deserved college graduation! We are so proud of what you have accomplished through countless hours of hard work, the ability to overcome challenges, and your dedication towards achieving your goals. Always look forward to your future, and realize you have the tools and ability to make it a bright one!  
❤ Mom & Family

**ALEX I. FELDMAN**  
College of Engineering and Computer Science  
Alex~ Congratulations on your outstanding achievement and well deserved college graduation! We are so proud of what you have accomplished through countless hours of hard work, the ability to overcome challenges, and your dedication towards achieving your goals. Always look forward to your future, and realize you have the tools and ability to make it a bright one!  
❤ Mom & Family

**STEFANIE ERICA LINDT**  
College of Business and Economics  
Stephanie,  
We are so proud of you. You did it! We can not wait to see what you do next. So keep on dreaming and the world will be yours.  
Love,  
Mom and Lyndsey

**STEFANIE ERICA LINDT**  
College of Business and Economics  
Stephanie,  
We are so proud of you. You did it! We can not wait to see what you do next. So keep on dreaming and the world will be yours.  
Love,  
Mom and Lyndsey
VINCENT MICHAEL MESSINA
College of Communications
The tassel is worth the hassle. Switch the tassel to the other side – you’ve done it! The future just called and it’s waiting for YOU! Today we celebrate your achievement. You deserve all the accolades! We are so proud of you, we love you Vinny!

Love,
Mom and Dad

NOAH HERNANDEZ
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
We are so proud of you sweet Noah. You have worked so hard for this. Keep on reaching for the stars!!

Nana and Pop Pops Love you a Bushel and a Peck......#EMBUH

ALEXANDRIA AGUILAR
College of The Arts
Congratulations Alex!
We are so proud of you and can’t wait to see where your adventures take you!

Love always,
Mom, Dad, Dylan & Devin

JAMIE CARPIO
College of The Arts
Jamie,
We are so proud of all of your accomplishments over the past 4 years. You have grown so much as both a beautiful dancer and person. We love you so much and can’t wait to see your next big move!

Love,
Mommy, Ate, and Mumble

B. ALEX BOSSERMAN
College of Communications
Alex has been a level-headed and caring person who desires fairness for all since he was little. Good traits for a natural leader like he is. His real passion is art and design...AND music. He has been able to display that talent while working on the Daily Titan. As the Director of Advertising he used his communication skills to help acquire ads for the sales team. Whether you end up in a foreign country teaching, become a newspaper editor, an advertising executive or a “famous artist”, we are so glad to call you our Son!

Love, Mom and Dad

NOA LIN
College of Health & Human Development
Congratulations! You did it! We are so incredibly proud of you and your accomplishments. Watching you bloom from the little ballerina girl into future nurse practitioner is nothing short of inspiring! You found your passion and went after it, with grace and dedication. Your future is so bright - and we are so excited to be by your side every step of the way.

With love,
Ima, Abba, Maya, Lulu & Pippa

MYRIAH JENNEVIE EPIO
College of Communications
Myriah,
We are so proud of all your accomplishments and can not wait for your newest adventure!

Love,
Daddy, Mommy, Kaila & Mady

VINCENT MICHAEL MESSINA
College of Communications
The tassel is worth the hassle. Switch the tassel to the other side – you’ve done it! The future just called and it’s waiting for YOU! Today we celebrate your achievement. You deserve all the accolades! We are so proud of you, we love you Vinny!

Love,
Mom and Dad
Not only are you graduating from college, you are doing so with honors. You have chosen a career that will benefit mankind. What greater achievement can one ask from another! You are a bright star which shines upon us and gives us such joy and pleasure. May your future be bright, happy and fulfilling.

We love you,
Mom & Papa

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College of Health & Human Development

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We love you,
Mom & Papa

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College of The Arts

Congratulations Alexandria!!

Happy graduation Alexandria! Prayers and blessings on your graduation and your future.

Love,
Lola Mel & Lolo Tom

---

College of Communications

THOMAS BOYCE MEDINA

Congratulations Tommy!!

Your family is very proud of you being on the Track & Field and holding a job while working on your degree. Congrats!!

Love,
from your grandma, aunt, and uncles

---

College of Communications

ALEXANDRIA AGUILAR

The first of our trio to graduate!! We’re so proud of you and can’t wait to see all of the things you’ll accomplish. You bring so much creativity and knowledge to the world around you and we’re priveledged to call you our friend.

Love,
Sarah and Makenzie

---

College of The Arts

ALEX BOSSERMAN

Now that you’ve graduated, attack life in the low post by always claiming, “I GOT BALL!!”

Love,
Uncle Garrett

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CONGRATS 2020 GRADS
Titan goes through graduate program twice after units expire

Nothing could stop Blanca Quinteros from earning her degree.

ANTHONY ROBLEDO
Editor

Earning a master’s degree demands years of hard work, sacrifice and tuition. Students are accepted into a graduate studies program with enough passion to tackle hours of labor for the satisfaction of walking on graduation day.

For Blanca Quinteros, this is a process that she endured twice.

As strong as a student’s passion to learn is, life is stronger. Unforeseen problems occur that no longer allow education to be a priority.

Quinteros completed her master’s degree in gerontology at Cal State Fullerton in 2009, with the exception of her thesis.

Before she could completely finish the program, life became cruel.

Quinteros experienced financial and personal problems that led her to believe she had no choice but to put her education on hold.

A little over five years later, Quinteros decided that she was ready to return to CSUF for the completion of her master’s thesis. When she decided to return to school, she had a new family. Having a master’s degree was not only in high demand but a necessity, she said.

She had difficulty re-enrolling at CSUF to complete her program because she was sent from department to department.

Quinteros said that the Admissions and Records staff told her to report to the department of gerontology, and the department sent her back to Admissions and Records.

“It took me a while. It was a process to find out, and eventually, I found out that after a certain time the courses expire,” Quinteros said.

CSUF graduate students have five years to complete all degree requirements and can request a two-year extension by filling out a petition. After the time limit, all outdated course work must be repeated.

After hearing about the expiration date, Quinteros’ first instinct was to give up on the idea of earning a degree.

But a few years later, and after considering the ways that a master’s degree would benefit her career, she decided to start the program from the beginning.

“The sad part and the reason why this is so important for me is because tuition more than doubled in a small period of time,” Quinteros said.

In addition to being about $40,000 in debt, Quinteros had to balance her courses and job with the responsibilities of being a mother to her first child while pregnant with her second.

“When I found out that I was pregnant with my second child, I decided that I needed to go back to school and that I was going to fight back to get back into school,” she said. “I needed to show my kids that I could do it.”

As she repeated the program, Quinteros avoided telling her classmates about her situation.

Quinteros said she did not want people to pity or judge her for not knowing about the time limit.

She commuted from Los Angeles to Fullerton, so she tried to take her courses one day of the week, often arriving home late.

Although it was mentally draining to take retake courses she already completed, she persevered and finished the program, this time for good. Quinteros said she was flushed with feelings of pride and joy when she graduated in spring 2019.

“I cried and cried the whole day. My six-year-old says, ‘Mom, why are you crying,’ and I couldn’t explain to her that you could cry when you’re happy,” she said. “It was climbing Everest. That’s what it felt like.”

The support of her family encouraged her to continue as they believed she could do it, she said.

Beyond emotional support, her husband took care of the kids on the nights that she was on campus late, Quinteros said.

“It was stamina. It took every ounce of patience and willpower to do it. I know many people would not do it. I know almost 100% of people would say ‘You’re insane, this is crazy,’” Quinteros said.

She also received support from her professors and the gerontology department who made sure she was able to take the courses she needed to graduate, she said.

“My degree is more valuable to me because I feel like I did it twice and I did it right,” she said. “Nobody can tell me that it’s not possible to get a master’s degree.”

Quinteros said most students in her situation would not have returned to complete the degree, which is why she feels the university should be more transparent about the expiration of graduate credit.

Quinteros said that a disclaimer stating that courses will expire in five years should be included in the graduate study plan.

“Had I had it somewhere, you better believe I would’ve been back at school on time. Just probably right on time,” Quinteros said.

Quinteros said that some people blamed her for not reading the entirety of the thick pamphlet in the school catalog where the disclaimer is written.

However, she said that she finds irony in the fact that the university sends her notices to return a textbook when she already knows she’s supposed to.

“I want to be an example of a mistake that I take responsibility for. I made the mistake. I fixed it. I’m not going to blame anyone for it, but it is a mistake that not only happened to me, it has happened to other people and it will happen more. If we can just fix it with a simple currency from the university’s part, it could make a difference because it would have made a difference for me,” Quinteros said.
Column: People will forever remember the class of COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic will not be the only legacy of the 2020 graduating class.

TALIA CANTLEY
Asst. Editor

Graduation and senior trips, among many other things, are canceled, and we will have to deal with the ramifications of being jobless for months to come.

The post-graduation experience that all college graduates look forward to is getting their first grown-up job, but it’s questionable how tangible that is now. Since our world has shifted to an online environment, it is crucial for those seeking employment to turn to LinkedIn and other online sites to hunt for jobs like never before.

However, it is expected that most employers have had to scale back work due to COVID-19, so it now seems even more impossible to enter the workforce. In the case that your field operates in-person, what are your next steps?

I think I can speak for everyone when I say the last half of the spring semester was draining. The more I think about it, the physical act of going to classes to turn in assignments, essays and projects actually motivated me to complete the work. Without driving to campus to sit in a classroom, see my professors and work with my peers, completing work at home in isolation was much more of a struggle. Pushing yourself to finish even one essay or online exam is far more straining with all the distractions of being at home.

For us graduates, participating in the commencement ceremony is more than walking across a stage to possibly hear your name read wrong. It symbolizes years of hard work and sleepless nights, not only in college but also in the years leading up to it.

A commencement ceremony embodies each graduate’s distinct background and the many sacrifices and difficulties they have had to overcome to get to this point. Moving the tassel from the right to the left side of your graduation cap means that all your hard work has paid off and that you now have a degree to add to your resume.

Although this year’s commencement ceremony has merely been postponed and not altogether canceled, graduates from the class of 2020 are still missing that last step to feel complete.

Graduation parties where we call for friends and family to gather to celebrate our achievements have moved to more non-traditional methods, such as drive-by parties, where attendees honk, cheer and drive by a person’s house with signs to celebrate their graduation.

As social distancing practices become the norm, it begs the question: when will our commencement ceremony finally take place? I know there is currently no answer, but that last step in a graduate’s college timeline means more than some may think.

Hearing that we have still graduated without a ceremony doesn’t really matter to many students who just want to be honored and praised for years of pulling all-nighters.

Graduating seniors deserve some way to commemorate their efforts over the trying time that is college, especially considering many of us who have come from difficult backgrounds and dealt with mental health issues, financial strains and many other obstacles along the way.

Despite being among a memorable class of graduates in 2020’s coronavirus pandemic, I wish the best for my classmates and peers who have such bright futures ahead of them.
Column: No matter how difficult the road to graduation, don’t ever stop

Everyone’s journey to a degree is different, but almost all are possible.

As a student of this year’s graduating class, I must say, this is not how I envisioned the finish line to look. After working toward this singular goal for 10 tumultuous years, I was hoping to ring it in with a bit more panache.

Accepting that diploma in front of my parents, having a celebration, popping bottles with my family and friends in attendance and giving a speech about the long winding road that had a stop sign at every turn, is more of what I had in mind.

But as I reflect on that road, the loss of a celebration pales in comparison to the gratitude I have to just be here. Graduating college in and of itself is not easy. Oftentimes, life has a way of making it that much more difficult.

I started my higher education journey at ITT Tech, which is now recognized as a for-profit college that scammed thousands of students, including myself.

However, before I could feel the weight of debt, I was faced with my first hurdle.

Halfway through my tenure there, I was hit with a crippling case of anxiety disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. It was so severe, that I became agoraphobic, dropped out of my classes and didn’t leave my house for two years.

During my self-imposed exile from society, I kept wishing for things to prompt my return to school. I started telling myself motivational words to overcome the face of overwhelming fear and anxiety.

DON’T STOP KEEP GOING.

It took a lot of therapy and effort, but eventually, I was ready to go back to school. However, by the time I was ready to go back to ITT Tech, the world had wised up to their thieving ways. After looking into the situation, albeit a little too late, I decided to cut my losses and not re-enroll. They permanently shut their doors a few years later.

Instead, I decided to do what I should have done in the first place and enrolled myself in community college.

But, I learned a harsh truth when I got there: Just because you and your old alma mater disappear, doesn’t mean the private and federal student loans do.

So there I was, not even having started my first day of real college and already a luxury car’s worth in debt.

DON’T LET THIS STOP YOU, KEEP GOING.

Around this time, I discovered Muay Thai, also known as Thai Boxing, and immediately fell in love with it. It gave me strength and a purpose that I hadn’t felt since I trained in martial arts as a kid. I decided I wanted to compete as a professional fighter and go to school to get a degree in business so that I could open an academy and share the beauty of martial arts with others. But before I could compete in my first fight, I herniated a disc in my spine and got arthritis in my spine while training, which took me out for a year.

After recovering from that, I went back to training. Within my first month back, I blew my ACL, meniscus and sprained my MCL in a freak accident while sparring. That cost me to sit out another two years.

During my time recovering, I decided that there had to be an easier way to make a living than destroying my body. While I could still open a martial arts academy, I never wanted to be one of those out-of-shape trainees who could only say and not do. I decided to go back to one of my original dreams: Becoming a journalist.

Unfortunately, as I nearly completed my associate degree in business, I changed my major and had to start all over again.

YOU’VE STARTED OVER BEFORE, DON’T STOP NOW.

So again I began anew, knowing that whatever hardships I faced, I would get there no matter what. I finally left community college and transferred to Cal State Fullerton.

During my first and second semesters, the ceiling gave in once again. I was fired from my job, I broke up with my long-term girlfriend and had to move out of our apartment.

The struggle to pay my bills and rent while dealing with the fallout of my failed relationship was so overwhelming at times, it became extremely difficult to focus on graduating. Even though I was the closest I’d ever been, I couldn’t see the finish line.

YOU’VE COME SO FAR, YOU’RE ALMOST THERE

And that’s to say nothing of how this pandemic has thrown us all of a loop. Somehow I did cross that finish line. Out of all the things I’ve learned on this frankly exhaustive educational journey, one thing that I will take with me everywhere is persistence.

You are a CSUF student. You are a Titan. Nothing can stop you.

We all have distressing events that hit us out of the blue. There are some of you reading this who face a far more difficult road.

It’s always easier to give up and give in when things get hard. But you’re a Titan, like the unstoppable forces of mythology.

There will always be things in your life that will try to stop you. But no matter the obstacle standing in your way or how long it takes you to graduate:

Don’t ever stop.
WORK TOWARDS YOUR GRADUATION THIS SUMMER.

SUMMER SESSION
Your 15, Your Way.
summer.fullerton.edu