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- In this challenging, chaotic, exhausting, frustrating and unprecedented year, you have completed your studies. Congratulations. During this year you have learned to pivot frequently, to social distance, how to properly wear a mask. You've stayed in your room so much that you've lost track of what day it is, and you've discovered the correct way to wash your hands. And you have forgotten what it's like to give or receive a hug or a handshake.

In coping with these changes and these challenges you have discovered how to be more flexible and adaptable. This lesson alone may prove more useful in life than your studies.

This end, which also marks a new beginning is filled with fresh challenges, big dreams, and much hope. Your future offers all of these things. But also, as life happens there will be failure, disappointment, and discouragement. What is needed to live large and to finish well?

I would suggest that you consider the wisdom found in the African proverb, which says "If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together."

Success in life is surrounding yourself with family, friends, mentors, and teachers who can speak to your life at all times. Companions during the hard times and companions to celebrate the good times. People who will love the successful you, and the happy you and the rotten you.

I think that there is great wisdom in the words of Minnie Louise Haskins, who wrote "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown and he replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand in the hand of God, that shall be better than light and safer than a known way'." As you step into your future, do it with family and friends and do it with God.