

ICLA

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Student recognition and academic achievement has never been more important, especially with the disruption that COVID-19 has caused to so many special events and rites of passage on campuses this year. While it has been disappointment and frustration over and over again for so many, it has also created opportunities and sprung new ideas for many as well. We are in the traditions business, and while the pandemic has shaken up academic traditions like we've never seen before – as they say, “the show must go on.”

Fortunately for our university partners, we've transformed our business into a digital retailer first and foremost. We don't even want to imagine what it would've been like a few years ago if this pandemic would've happened. But now, we were prepared and have provided digital solutions, an e-commerce platform and virtual events in this time of need.

We've assisted our bookstore partners with Virtual Grad Fairs for those students who have looked forward to their big day of

ordering graduation items – from their regalia, to graduation announcements, diploma frames, and their college rings – all through their online school store. While these events may lack the personal touch and a store traffic boost that typically happens, the virtual experience is still one of celebration for the students and their families, while serving the bookstores well with a turnkey program.

Likewise, commencement ceremonies have been canceled or postponed and many of our university partners have reached out for ideas and technology platforms that can mitigate some of the loss that has occurred for the school and its graduates. The Virtual Commencement Ceremony we've provided to schools consists of a graduation landing page, email invites for the graduates and their family, downloadable announcements, a “Photo Story” for social media, and the “Celebration Page” that allows the commencement directors to produce their virtual ceremony with grad slides and videos.

For more than 20 years, we've worked directly with alumni associations developing and growing official ring programs and traditions. These industry-leading partnerships have been a significant revenue stream for the associations,

while also becoming an anticipated milestone achievement for the students as they draw near to graduation. The Official Ring Ceremonies and Rituals have been affected by the pandemic, but that hasn't stopped alumni associations from continuing these traditions via Facebook Live, YouTube, and even with the help of FedEx delivery drivers getting in on the fun of presenting students away from campus with their official ring.

One of the most exciting brand collaborations for our business launched in September with the new Kendra Scott – Balfour jewelry collection. Partnering with a global fashion brand has opened up new possibilities for both companies, and especially our college partners. Like in so many cases, our bookstore, alumni association and other campus partners are helping us promote this new line to students, on campus and off. Through a powerful email marketing campaign and social media push, we're reaching students and their families with a quick and easy “size & buy” online ordering process that includes a downloadable finger sizing tool, design and share features, and ring visualization for the customer to see all of their customization come to life.

It's a time of adapting and accepting change. And we're always looking for ways to keep these traditions alive with the help of our technology platforms.

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