

**Charge to the Graduating Class of 2023**  
**University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry**  
**Masonic Auditorium, San Francisco, California**  
**June 18, 2023**

**Nader A. Nadershahi, DDS, MBA, EdD**  
**Dean and Vice Provost**

What a joy it is to share this special moment in the lives of our outstanding graduates of the Class of 2023.

I am so proud of you...We are proud of each of you, and also your families, significant others, friends, teachers, and mentors who were part of your journey.

Your time at the Dugoni School certainly was remarkable! I have seen you complete your programs in a world which faced a global pandemic, recession, natural disasters, and war. But through it all...through it all... you persevered because of your grit and determination... as well as the support of your faculty and loved ones.

As you prepare for your future and go out into the world, I encourage you to lean into what makes you special so that you may serve others at your very best. I encourage you to lean into your humanity. I know that our humanistic education has prepared you for that.

As I was thinking about what to share with you during my charge, I wondered what the generative pre-trained transformers like Chat GPT or Google Bard would say to you today. You know – it was not too bad. They started with recognizing the audience, showed gratitude, shared some thoughts on the importance of our work in the healing professions, provided some advice, and thanked the audience.

What Artificial Intelligence could not do – and cannot do is what you and I bring to our patients and to healthcare. AI could not predict or know the impact that my mother had on my values and who I am today as a person – as a doctor – and as a teacher. It could not understand the depths of what I felt while losing her to cancer and how that impacts my personal interactions today. We can and must lean into our humanity to care for our patients.

We are fortunate to live in a time when we have access to tools, technologies, and therapeutics that will help us be better... at serving our communities. But we can only do that through our humanity, through the diverse experiences and backgrounds that make us unique.

Our human experience over the last few years has allowed us to learn the importance of what I like to call the ABCs of our post-pandemic world... **Access – Belonging – and Compassion.**

It is our responsibility to provide **Access** to quality – collaborative care that places the person and their determinants of health at the center of all that we do.

- Are we creating opportunities for primary dental, medical, and mental health care for historically marginalized or underserved members of our communities and families?
- How do we provide easy access to care for individuals with intellectual, developmental, and acquired disabilities?

As members and leaders of the healthcare team, it is up to each of us to ensure there is access, not only to care, but access to our great profession. We must create a sense of **Belonging** in our disciplines of dentistry and other areas across healthcare.

- What are we doing to encourage young people to enter the healthcare professions so that our health workforce reflects the communities and society we are so privileged to serve?

The last letter in our ABCs after Access and Belonging is **Compassion**. Compassion is arguably the biggest lesson that we learned during the multiple challenges of pandemic, social justice, climate, economy, and war. We may feel sorry for someone we see in distress, or we may take it a step further and feel what they are feeling through our empathy. On the other hand, compassion drives us to take the final step and to take action by helping reduce suffering.

- Do we reach out with a kind word or smile when we see someone in their lowest moment?
- Do we speak up for those who are not able to do so for themselves?

Take advantage of the wonderful advances that will evolve through your lives and careers and lean into your humanity – lean into your humanity by remembering the ABCs of **Access, Belonging, and Compassion**.

Mahatma Ghandi reminded us that *“the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”*

It is your time – your time to serve your patients, your community, your family - and it is your time – your time to find yourself.

Enjoy this celebration and special milestone in your lives – Your Dugoni School family is expecting a lot from you.

Congratulations, Class of 2023, good luck and I cannot wait to see what you will achieve as we cheer you on in your lives and in your careers.

Thank you, and how about a final round of applause for the best graduates anywhere in the world...the doctors and dental hygienists of the Class of 2023!