

White Coat Ceremony
DDS Class of 2025 / IDS Class of 2025 / DH Class of 2024
University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry
Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, San Francisco, California
July 29, 2023

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

Welcome

Good morning. My name is Nader Nadershahi and I have the privilege of serving as Dean of the University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to welcome you all on behalf of our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and patients – I extend a warm welcome from the entire Dugoni School family.

Today is an important step in the journey for our students. We are so happy to mark this special moment in front of family and friends in the room with us – and those watching from around the world through the live feed.

To our students – You have worked incredibly hard to be where you are today!

This White Coat Ceremony symbolically marks the important transition to providing care for your patients.

As a Dugoni School graduate myself, I can still remember my first patient interaction 31 years ago like it was yesterday. I remember my patient's name and the concern that we were addressing on that day. I look forward to hearing about the memories that you will make.

So how did this tradition of a white coat ceremony come to be?

The white coat has served as the pre-eminent symbol of doctors and healers for over 100 years. However, you may be surprised to learn that prior to the late 19th century, doctors wore... not white, but black.

Black attire was, and is, considered formal. Consequently, until about 1900, doctors wore black since medical encounters were thought of as serious and formal matters.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, when health care became a truly scientific enterprise, the “purity” of medicine became reflected in the garb of doctors and nurses. The white coat became the symbol of medical authority and respect, as advance upon advance firmly established the patient-doctor relationship as a beneficial encounter.

The first full-fledged White Coat Ceremony in medicine took place in 1993 at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

However, the very first White Coat Ceremony at a dental school started with – guess who? It started with us – the Dugoni School of Dentistry – back in the mid-1990s. During that time, Dr. Arthur A. Dugoni, our late Dean Emeritus, visited a medical white coat ceremony at the University of Minnesota. He was so touched by the event that he brought the idea back to our school’s leadership team, and we became the very first dental school to hold such an event. I am pleased to share that it is a practice in almost all health education programs now.

The white coat you receive today signifies to patients that you will strive:

- To regard them with the utmost respect
- To treat their illnesses to the best of your ability
- To listen carefully; and
- To preserve the dignity of each individual and the privacy of information shared as a result of the relationship between care giver and the patient

To all the families, significant others, and friends here today and watching online, these outstanding students would not be here without your continued love, support, and encouragement. Thank you for what you continue to do for them.

I would like to ask all of our students to please stand, face your loved ones here and online, and give them a round of applause for all that they have done to help you reach this special moment in your lives and education.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our Alumni Association represented today by Dr. Peter Liu. The alumni support students in many ways during their education, and have co-sponsored the white coats, along with the Office of Development.

Also, please join me in thanking all the volunteers for helping out today, and a special thanks to Sandra Derian, our Communications Coordinator, for all of her hard work on many of the details of today’s event.

Closing Remarks

Will the white coat honorees please remain standing? Please turn around to face your loved ones again.

Distinguished guests, please join me in applauding these talented individuals on receiving their white coats and for what they have achieved in their professional growth. Let me be one of the first to offer my personal congratulations to you. The faculty and

staff at the Dugoni School and all of your loved ones and supporters are very proud of you.

As an oral health care provider, others will look to you for help. Through your unique knowledge and skills, you will be able to reduce human pain and suffering, treat disease – and ultimately help people lead healthier and happier lives.

I would like to remind you about four important themes that spell out the word HELP:

Humanism – As you prepare for your future in clinical practice, 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 is preparing you for that. Our “Head, Heart, Hands” philosophy emphasizes technical knowledge, communication skills, and a humanistic approach to patient care. Lean into your humanity as you interact with patients from all walks of life.

Ethics – We have heard some insights today about ethics in dentistry. The foundation of a strong relationship with your patient begins with the trust that you will earn through your ethics. Never underestimate the importance of what you bring to your patients through your heart and through your ethics.

Leadership – You will be leaders in the dental operatories – from the treatment planning decisions, to communicating with patients, to interacting with fellow practitioners and staff. I know that your leadership and confidence will only grow from this day on. Leadership is one of the core values at the Dugoni School. It extends far beyond the dental practice as exemplified by our leaders from the organized profession. I encourage you to stay involved in leadership opportunities here at the Dugoni School and beyond once you graduate and stay involved with your local communities. And finally...

Philanthropy – You may have heard a famous quote from Winston Churchill: *“You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give.”* Philanthropy can be expressed in many ways – from volunteering time, donating your expertise, or donating money. As students, you have been supported in so many ways by your family, friends, and other loved ones. Some have been supported through scholarships, mentorships, or other forms of philanthropy from our Alumni Association, Dugoni School Foundation, and other organizations. I hope you build a passion and interest in philanthropy so that you, too, can make a difference in the lives of others.

I know that you certainly will touch many lives and improve the health of your patients.

You will have many individual moments and connections with people during the course of your career. Each of these moments will make an impact on someone else.

In closing, I would like to share a brief poem called “The Power of One” that highlights how our individual actions – how your individual actions – can shape the world of

someone else – and maybe even the world itself.

The Power of One
By Ashish Ram

One song can spark a moment,
One flower can wake the dream.
One tree can start a forest,
One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship,
One handclasp lifts a soul.
One star can guide a ship at sea,
One word can frame the goal.

One vote can change a nation,
One sunbeam lights a room.
One candle wipes out darkness,
One laugh will conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey,
One word must start each prayer.
One hope will raise our spirits,
One touch can show you care.

One voice can speak with wisdom,
One heart can know what's true.
One life can make the difference,
You see, IT'S UP TO YOU!

I hope you feel proud of your amazing accomplishment today. The future of our great profession shines brighter than ever because of what you will do in your careers and the difference you will make for others!

On behalf of the University of the Pacific, Dugoni School family, congratulations to our white coat recipients, and thank you all again for joining us today.

I hope you all enjoy the rest of this beautiful day.