

**White Coat Ceremony**  
**DDS Class of 2027 / IDS Class of 2027 / DH Class of 2026**  
**University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry**  
**Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, San Francisco, California**  
**July 19, 2025**

**Elisa M. Chávez, DDS**  
**Interim Dean**

Good morning. My name is Elisa Chávez and I have the privilege of serving as Interim Dean of the University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry. I am very pleased to welcome you all on behalf of our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and patients – and extend a warm welcome from the entire Dugoni School family.

Today is an important step in the journey for our students as they transition to provide direct care to our patients. This White Coat Ceremony symbolically marks this important transition. 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 Livestream. Our students have worked incredibly hard to be where they are today!

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 19<sup>th</sup> century, doctors wore... not white, but black. Black attire was, and is, considered formal. So until about 1900, doctors wore black since medical encounters were thought of as serious and formal matters.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when health care became a truly scientific enterprise, the “pureness” of medicine became reflected in the clothing worn by doctors and nurses. The white coat became the symbol of medical authority and respect, as a series of medical advances 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 us – with 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. White coat ceremonies are now a practice in many health education programs around the country.

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, these outstanding students would not be here without your continued love, support, and encouragement. Thank you for what you have done to get them to this point and continue to do to support them in their endeavors.

I would like to ask all of our students to please stand – look out to 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. Wesley E. Wong. 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**

Let's all have another round of applause for these talented students 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, staff and administrators 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 touch many lives, you will reduce pain and suffering, treat disease, improve quality of life – and help people lead healthier and happier lives.

You will have both routine and extraordinary moments and connections with patients and colleagues during the course of your career and each of these will make your journey unique. The impact you will have on others will also be unlike that of anyone else. And, this is where you will start your journey to shape the clinician you wish to be, to realize your dreams and to know what it means to be an oral health care professional.

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

Please enjoy the time outside where you can take pictures with your friends and family in the beautiful setting by the water.

I hope you all enjoy the rest of this wonderful day. Thank you!

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