

Student Commencement Address
University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry
Masonic Auditorium, San Francisco, California
June 5, 2025

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DDS Class of 2025

Thank you for having me here today. This is going to be quite a challenge - summarizing an entire three years of an experience into a few short minutes but I'll give it my best. So this is it. This moment—right here and now—is the culmination of our dreams. For many of us, it's a dream that existed long before we stepped foot into dental school. But it's a dream we have all realized, and today we stand here—awakened and inspired- ready to dream bigger.

I was 17 years old and a junior in high school when I first discovered the accelerated dental program at the Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry. Growing up in my mom's dental clinic, I always envisioned myself becoming a dentist.

Fast forward five years later, I was walking through the glass doors of 155 Fifth Street, ready to start the Class of 2025's very first day of school. On that morning, Dean Nadershahi shared a quote from our namesake, Dr. Arthur A. Dugoni, which reads, "Here, we grow people, and along the way, they become doctors."

It has been my absolute privilege to witness the transformation of the DDS, IDS, Resident, and Dental Hygiene Class of 2025 becoming skilled clinicians and astounding human beings.

Together, we have navigated some of the most challenging years of our lives. We began our journey in sim lab, brimming with excitement, only to quickly realize how expensive plastic teeth can be. We stayed up late, perfecting our crown preparations, hoping that Dr. Courton might check off our homework—spoiler alert: he probably didn't! We spent countless hours side by side, pouring over our anatomy and histology slides, wondering what exactly Dr. Asadi meant by the difference in efferent vs afferent and why that superior cervical ganglia was so important!

When I think of the Class of 2025, the first word that comes to mind is resilience. This experience would not be complete without YOU. You bright, wonderful, eclectic people who made this experience unforgettable.

I've never encountered a more selfless, compassionate, and welcoming group of people than the Class of 2025. Every member of this class is an integral part of the whole. I think of Nick, Daniel, Zane, Breanna, and all of our student leaders, who dedicate their personal time to serving their peers.

There's a common phrase that we use in our institution to reference the comradery felt here - "The Dugoni School Family." I now invite my fellow graduates to please stand, turn around, and look for your loved ones in the crowd.

Our Dugoni family extends far beyond the students we sit next to. They are the ones we called when we failed a practical or had a tough day in clinic. They are the ones who sat beside us while we scrambled to turn in an assignment at 11:59 PM. They are the ones who are no longer with us, but who will always remain in our hearts.

To my mom, my aunt, Garrett, and Casey —thank you for your unwavering belief in me. You are my reason why. To every parent, sibling, partner, family member, and friend — we are here because of the sacrifices you've made to help us reach this moment. Thank you. (wait for applause)

And now, I invite my fellow graduates to turn around, I invite their loved ones, our faculty and staff to turn towards our Dean as we say - Dean Nadershahi. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to support your students. It is because of you that the Class of 2025 is here today. You set an extraordinary example of leadership, showing integrity, vision, and always leading with compassion. You encouraged us to always rise to our fullest potential. You have deeply impacted the hearts and the lives of the Class of 2025 and we say from the bottom of our hearts - Thank you. (wait for applause)

You may now be seated.

One of my favorite quotes by Maya Angelou states, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget the way you made them feel."

To our faculty and staff, we will never forget the way you made us feel. You uplifted us, empowered us, and provided support and encouragement when we needed it most. The respect and guidance we received from our faculty and staff form the foundation of this school. We thank you for shaping us into the doctors we are today and the future leaders of tomorrow.

Many regard the Dugoni School's accelerated curriculum as our most remarkable feat. However, I now understand that it is our humanism which sets us apart. Let us always remember that it is not our degrees but rather the kindness and compassion that we have developed here that makes us worthy of being people's doctors.

My class, we leave here today not only as dental hygienist, endodontist, orthodontist, and dentist, but also as the future of dental leadership and innovation. Before me, I see business owners, future specialist, military leaders, educators, presidents of various dental organizations, policy makers, and world changers.

For years, we have dreamed of this moment, worked towards it, and as of right now — Class of 2025—we did it.

Congratulations!