

Charge to the Graduating Class of 2021
University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry
Masonic Auditorium, San Francisco, California
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Dean

To our graduates, families, friends, faculty, staff, and university leaders, it is such a pleasure to be with you in person on this historic day.

This is a historic day because of all that we have been through together. History has had its eyes on us and I am so proud of how these graduates and the entire University of the Pacific and Dugoni School have faced, and are emerging from, these challenges. It has been an extraordinary time during your education with a global pandemic, a global recession, turbulent elections, and deeply felt social and racial injustice.

Each of us faced personal and professional challenges and a staggering...unthinkable number of lost loved ones throughout our country and globe. You are all here because you and the entire Dugoni School family discovered who we really are, we learned what we might be, how we can shape our future, our lives, our great school, and our profession.

Today is truly historic in so many ways. This month marks the beginning of the 125th anniversary year of our school's founding as the College of Physicians and Surgeons. On June 15th, we were founded in 1896 right here in the great city of San Francisco. Interestingly, our first campus building was only about a block away from where our current campus stands.

Each of you has made history by facing the challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic head on...safely and successfully. It is, however, the second major pandemic that our school has faced. The 1918 influenza pandemic — which lasted until 1920 — was the first. Now, the years of 2020 and 2021 will forever be etched in our memories and in the history of our school and university.

I am so proud of the resiliency shown by our graduates and the entire Dugoni School family during this challenging year. Sadly, other areas of the world are still grappling with the pandemic. Our hearts go out to them, and to family and friends of those who are here today who are still facing severe challenges because of the pandemic.

All of you sitting before me today have a unique experience with what you have gone through together. So one other historic element today is in the form of something physical that I hope will always bind each of our graduates together as family. It is the "challenge coin" that you all received. I want you to know that you are the only people

in the world to have this specially designed Class of 2021 challenge coin, where it signifies your perseverance through the pandemic.

Challenge coins have a long-standing tradition in the military. They are given to someone to confirm membership in an organization or group, and it can also honor a person for going above and beyond the call of duty. All of our graduates... all of you... have gone above and beyond the call of duty as you persevered through the pandemic. I hope you cherish this keepsake coin and the unity that it represents for the Class of 2021. As you come back for our annual alumni meetings and other alumni gatherings, this coin will be a special bond that you will always share as a class.

I would like to share a final lesson with our graduates about the ABCs. Yes, after all your educational accomplishments, we are going back to the basics and talk about the ABCs! But this is a little different. I want to share my ABCs for our post-pandemic world. What have we learned over the last fifteen months that will make us even stronger, the ABCs of your post pandemic success... access... belonging... and compassion.

A – Access: We have learned the importance of access to quality health care and access to this great profession.

B – Belonging: Our humanistic education is founded in providing an environment where everyone belongs and is part of our success and...

C – Compassion: Going beyond just empathy where we feel and understand what others are experiencing... But showing compassion by taking action in caring for one another. This is what helped us during the pandemic. Access, belonging, and compassion helped us take care of the vulnerable in our communities and emerge even stronger.

As we come out of the pandemic, remember your ABCs. Life and success are not complicated if you stay centered on your strong values.

We have acknowledged the past in today's history-making commencement. However, I am even more excited to see what you will accomplish in the future. You are the very best and brightest. You are positioned to do great things. You have the head, heart, and hands to make our world better by the work that you do and the lives that you touch.

I will end my charge with a poem by Christian Larson that I was reminded of as our 12 year old daughter was memorizing it for a presentation at school tomorrow...Promise Yourself...

"Promise Yourself

To be so strong that nothing

can disturb your peace of mind.

*To talk health, happiness, and prosperity
to every person you meet.*

*To make all your friends feel
that there is something in them.*

*To look at the sunny side of everything
and make your optimism come true.*

*To think only the best, to work only for the best,
and to expect only the best.*

*To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others
as you are about your own.*

*To forget the mistakes of the past
and press on to the greater achievements of the future.*

*To wear a cheerful countenance at all times
and give every living creature you meet a smile.*

*To give so much time to the improvement of yourself
that you have no time to criticize others.*

*To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear,
and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.*

*To think well of yourself and to proclaim this fact to the world,
not in loud words but great deeds.*

*To live in faith that the whole world is on your side
so long as you are true to the best that is in you.”*

We have seen the best that is in you and in closing:

Congratulations to our Class of 2021... on what you have accomplished today and in the years that have led up to this moment in history! We are so proud of you! I will miss you, but please remember that you are always part of the Dugoni School family, and we look forward to welcoming you back home often.

Thank you, and how about a final round of applause for the doctors and dental hygienists of the Class of 2021.