

Student Commencement Address
University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry
Masonic Auditorium, San Francisco, California
June 19, 2022

Dr. Samantha Gallia
DDS Class of 2022

Thank you, Dean Nadershahi. My family didn't know I would be up here, so: hi mom and dad.

I was 16 years old and a sophomore in high school when my dad first sent me a link about the accelerated dental program at the Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry. Having practically grown up in his oral surgery office, I had always dreamed of going to dental school, just like my dad. I scrolled through the school webpage and was instantly captivated by the student doctors' shiny white coats and big smiles in the sim lab- I now know that one was a lie. The next day, I called up the Office of Admissions and told them that I was going to be a student there one day; where should I begin? The person on the other end of the line chuckled at 16-year-old me and told me that I should probably start by passing AP Bio.

Five years later, I walked through the glass doors of 155 Fifth Street for the class of 2022's very first day. On that morning, Dean Nadershahi shared a quote from our namesake, the beloved Dr. Art Dugoni, which read, "Here we grow people, and along the way, they become doctors." At the time, I remember thinking, "Uhh, I'm here to become a doctor. I'm already a person, why do they need to grow me into a person?" I didn't really get it. Well, after the past 3 years, I can confidently say that I get it now.

It has been my greatest honor to watch the DDS, IDS, Resident, and Dental Hygiene classes of 2022 transform into excellent doctors and clinicians. I know we also have some members of the class of 2020 in the house, and to welcome you, I would like to reminisce on some memories that I know we can *all* relate to. Together, we have withstood some of the most mentally and physically challenging years of our lives. We began our journeys in the sim lab, buzzing with excitement and motivation- until we learned how much plastic teeth cost. We stayed late into the night practicing our preparations, trying to get that perfect 90 degree exit angle in hopes that Dr. Chen would check off our homework preps. Spoiler: he probably didn't. In class, we spent hours sitting side by side, pouring over anatomy and histology slides, wondering what the heck Dr. Asadi meant by "superior cervical ganglion" and why he kept saying it over and over.

When I think of the class of 2022, the first word that comes to my mind is **resilience**. Together, we have experienced great joys and insurmountable losses, including that of our own Dr. Dugoni. We provided clinical care throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, during which we had the challenge of balancing the emotional weight of our patients

alongside the physical weight of a surgical gown, N95 respirator, eye protection, and a face shield. Together, we have celebrated life milestones including birthdays, engagements, marriages, and babies. Mostly Tyson with the baby thing though- I think that makes 8, right Tyson?

I have never met a more selfless, welcoming, eclectic bunch than the class of 2022. Each member of my class represents an integral piece without which we are not whole. I think of Maggie, Steven, Patrick, Heera, and all of our student leaders who so diligently dedicated their personal time to serve their peers. When Franz was not able to transition with us to clinic due to a tragic accident, our whole class rallied around him through his recovery. Though he cannot be here today, I know Franz has a bright future ahead making his positive impact on the world and being an exceptional representative of the class of 2022. From Angela's study guides getting us through 12 finals in one week to Ian's promptly posted memes making us feel better if we didn't do as well as we'd hoped, from the dental hygiene students brightening our day in integrated clinic to the residents saving us in our specialty rotations, we made it to this finish line only by helping one another along the way.

There is a common phrase we use at our institution to reference the camaraderie felt here: Dugoni School family. I'd now like to ask my fellow graduates to stand, turn around, and pick out your loved ones in the crowd. Our Dugoni School family extends far beyond those to our left or our right. They are the ones who we called after a failed practical or hard day of clinic. They are the ones who kept the dog or toddler quiet while we took our at home exams on Exemplify. They are the ones who sat beside us at 11:55pm while we scrambled to finish our ICS presentation due at midnight. They are the ones who are no longer with us but still remain our reason "why." To my mom, dad, Louis, Ava, and Jack: thank you for believing in me. To every parent, sibling, partner, family member, and friend: We are here because of the sacrifices that you have made to get us here- thank you. You may be seated.

One of my favorite quotes by Maya Angelou reads, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." To our faculty and staff, we will never forget the way that you made us feel uplifted and empowered during our time here. I will remember Dr. Booth strolling through the clinic greeting students with "Hi doctor" which immediately made us stand a little taller. I will remember approaching Dr. Gluskin during endo preclin with tears in my eyes holding my 2 rooted maxillary premolar with 10 gutta percha cones sticking out the apex. He told me chin up, this is fixable, I will help you. I will remember the hours spent with my research mentor, Dr. Andrew Young as he patiently answered every one of my questions and always treated me as a colleague, an equal. The respect and guidance we receive from our faculty and staff here is the foundation that this school is built upon, and from the bottom of our hearts, we thank you for shaping us into the doctors of tomorrow.

"We grow people, and along the way, they become doctors." I get it now. Many regard the Dugoni School's accelerated three-year curriculum as our most remarkable feat;

however, I now know it is our humanism, which sets us apart. Let us always remember that it is not our degrees, rather, the kindness and care that we have developed here which make us worthy of being people's doctors. From the top of my head to the tips of my toes, I could not be more proud to be a member of the class of 2022.

To my class, we leave here today not only as dental hygienists, endodontists, orthodontists, and dentists, but also as the future of dental leadership and innovation. I see before me future specialists, business owners, military leaders, presidents of the CDA and ADA, educators, policy makers, and world changers. For years, you have dreamed of it, worked for it, and as of right now, we did it! Congratulations!