

CHANCELLOR COLLINS COMMENCEMENT REMARKS
49th COMMENCEMENT
JUNE 5, 2022

It is a privilege, for the fifteenth time, to welcome the family, friends, and graduates of the three schools of our institution to a commencement celebration.

Today, one of your dreams comes true. Surrounded by family and friends, that dream placed you here at a long-awaited celebration.

For years, you have succeeded with your studies, positively impacted your communities and demonstrated, with fervor, that you understand that a life in nursing, medicine or science is a privilege earned by few, valued by so many and depended on by all.

What a fortuitous time it is to be entering your professions!

Over the past few years, every citizen of the world has been impacted by the science and health professions: Billions have received new vaccines, the development of which was the byproduct of years of incremental progress from an international consortium of committed scientists, scholars all, who were prepared to face the challenges posed by a novel and persistent virus. . Millions more have received care by altruistic professionals who put the care of others above their personal and familial concerns and labored day and night to comfort those most in need.

Nurses, moved to the point of exhaustion, have cared for their patients and served their communities with heroic efforts, all the while placing the needs of others above their own.

Physicians, demonstrating an inspiring fidelity to their professional oath, have developed new treatments, logged endless hours in ICUs and on patient wards, and created innovative care methodologies, all the while standing stalwartly by their patients and colleagues despite facing wave after wave of new hospital admissions.

Scientists, motivated by global need, have applied years of knowledge from discoveries heretofore under-appreciated and, in full view of a critical public eye, deployed new treatments, vaccines and testing methodologies that will serve the world's population for generations to come.

There was triumph; setback; discovery; collaboration; recriminations; supply chain challenges; mobilization; politicization; gratitude; and mistrust.

A virus challenged humanity and continues to garner the world's attention, but so do our scientific, health care and public health professionals who continue to monitor and assess our global needs, resources and preparations at a time when it is not easy to gain consensus and create partnership to serve the greater good.

What a fortuitous time it is that you are entering your professions!

At times like these we need you more than ever. We need your idealism; your creativity; your willingness to serve others; and, most importantly, your commitment to put others before self in full recognition of the fulfillment derived from doing so.

Into the future, the children of our world will need you like never before. It is the reality that our children need good nutrition, adequate hydration, safe schools, effective vaccines and a home that is not threatened by war. Those in the healing professions and science can make enormous contributions to the health and well-being of children. We need you!

Into the future, the world's community will look toward and depend upon the ingenuity, innovation and intellect of our best and brightest minds to respond to the next public health crisis, the next pathogen, the next pandemic with passion, perseverance, principles and precision. Your science and scholarship can, and hopefully will, change the course of the history of disease. We need you.

Into the future, an aging population will face challenges that, up until now, would not even have been considered. Confronted by their longevity, we shall need to care for those whose memory is failing, whose body is becoming weakened and whose very being is fraught with loneliness and isolation. With you by our side, all can be comforted. We need you!

Into the future, our communities will need leaders, pillars whose shoulders can support decisions that assure the common good, public health and societal needs, especially for those who are without shelter, food, clothing or medical care. You can be those pillars of progress, our leaders of tomorrow. We need you!

Into the future, each of you will be asked, at times, to care for your colleagues. In those situations, please extend your hand and offer the goodness of your heart, for there is no greater responsibility than to be asked to care for a colleague in need. Our professions and fellow colleagues will be grateful. We need you!

Into the future, there will be moments when all therapeutic options for your patients have been exhausted; in those moments, please remember the privilege that it is to hold the hand of your patients with esteem. For those patients at those times, we need you!

Please know how wonderful it has been for all of us who have been the stewards of your education to see you grow and prosper as future colleagues. Each of us has taken an oath to educate those who come behind us in our professions. This is a sacred obligation to which we now welcome you to join us in fulfilling.

During the trying and triumphant moments of your career, please know of the enduring pride that the UMass Chan Medical School shall have in calling you one of our own.

We are grateful that you have answered the call to service in your chosen professions.

You are scientists, nurses and physicians at their best.

Congratulations and Godspeed along your professional journey, because we need you!