



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA  
MORSANI COLLEGE OF MEDICINE  
GRADUATING CLASS OF 2014  
COMMENCEMENT SPEECH  
Mahaffey Theater, St. Petersburg, FL  
April 11, 2014

To the USF College of Medicine Class of 2014, it is my honor and pleasure to give you the "Charge to the Graduates" speech. I have truly enjoyed my interactions with your dynamic class, whether it was in the classroom setting or in the wards of the VA Hospital or in the energetic Morning Report Conference that we hold at the VA Hospital every morning.

Right before I came up here, Dr. Bryan Bogner, our Vice Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education, was telling me how much he was enjoying the speech just given by Lowell Dawson of the graduating class. He also told me, "I'd hate to be the guy to have to follow that speech. Oh wait, that's you! Good Luck, Joe". Thanks a lot Bryan.

I know that I am the last thing standing between you graduates and the end of this wonderful ceremony and the official end of your years in medical school. During the Faculty breakfast and during my time on the Platform stage, I could tell faculty members appeared relieved that I only appeared to be holding three pages of a speech, thus signifying a short and sweet speech to end the ceremony. What you all don't know is that I have another five pages in my pocket that I did not want to pull out until right now. Just kidding, of course, as President Genshaft would not likely be very happy if I decided to pull off such a twist. Anyway, most of those pages had a list of similar "who's who" in the class of 2014 which Lowell just read off, so everyone can thank him for covering those bases already for us.

I would like to first thank all of the graduates of the Class of 2014 for all the great care you all have provided already as third and fourth year medical students to the community here in the Tampa Bay area. This is the place I have called home for most of my life and on behalf of my hometown, I thank you as well for the great compassion that you showed our community's sickest patients, whether they had end-stage liver disease, end stage lung disease, cancer, or severe sepsis.

As a member of the USF Faculty, I have been proud to bring my family members to care at USF Health to include involvement by medical students, beginning about ten years ago with my oldest daughter Kaitlyn when I brought her to be cared for by medical students, medical residents, and medical fellows under the tutelage of Dr. Dennis Ledford in the Division of Allergy and Immunology in our Department of Internal Medicine. Dr. Ledford has even convinced my daughter Kaitlyn to commit to USF for Allergy and Immunology fellowship while still in elementary school at the Academy of the Holy Names. Now that is the type of recruitment and mentoring that makes USF Health stand out as the best in class, not to be matched by anyone else in the country!

Two years ago, The Class of 2014 asked me to speak to them at the Clinician Ceremony that we had at the Marshall Center. It probably seems about half a decade ago to most of the Class of 2014 given all of the collective experiences that you have been subjected to as third and fourth year medical students, from complex written tests to difficult standardized patients and even to include how to measure EKG intervals if you are stuck with nothing other than your belt as demonstrated by Internal Medicine physician Dr. Kevin O'Brien. To summarize what we discussed that day, I challenged the class to become "five-tool" physicians in the same manner as star baseball players are referred to as five-tool all-stars.

I challenged the class to exceed in the following areas of that "five-tool" physician plan:

- (1) Hone their passion to succeed as physicians;
- (2) Increase their thirst for medical knowledge;

- (3) Establish a commitment to excellence at all times;
- (4) Build an undeniable work ethic for your patients;
- (5) Answer that vocational call to humanism at all times .

I can confidently state in being able to closely watch this class over the last two years that I have a final assessment to give and I would sum it up in two words: "MISSION ACCOMPLISHED !"

This class will always be special to me and the other USF Faculty because despite possibly facing the most challenges I have ever seen a class face in my many years here at USF, they more than met my challenge that I gave them two years ago.

I now ask the Class of 2014 to do three final things as you all move forward from this wonderful celebration we are having. They are the following:

First, maintain that level of confidence that you have shown me and the USF Faculty in your clinical abilities. There is not one local, regional, or national health care leader that has ever had anything to say to me about the quality of our medical student graduates other than the words "awesome", "excellent", "outstanding". You all need to realize that USF medical school graduates are first round draft picks for jobs in the private and academic sector.

It is natural for you all to be nervous as you start residency but remember that none of the USF Faculty that you see here before you jumped from the fourth year of medical school to the senior year of residency or to the junior faculty level. No one received an exemption from intern year. we all had to deal with the 2 am cardiac arrest, the first central line procedure in the sickest of patients, and even the first conference case presentation when we had a certain "not so nice" attending sitting in the front row staring at us as we stated every fact about our patient. We all went through what you all go through and here we are as USF Faculty teaching having just taught you the first lessons of your career in patient care.

Second, don't turn your back on leadership opportunities. As stated by Vice Admiral Nathan in his speech, we need the caliber of graduates such as yourself shaping the future of this profession. Included in leadership is mentoring, which is one of the most powerful aspects of any great leader in health care. Take the time to invest in those who will be placed under you, whether they are a medical student or an intern as you go past your first year. There are only so many people you can take care of in a day, but if you mold those underneath you in your example of humanism and high quality medical care, you will truly be making an impact on thousands to tens of thousands of patients each day.

And the final thing that I would like for you all to do leaving today's graduation is to CELEBRATE THIS MOMENT ! MD BABY ! Watch those graduation video DVD's ! Celebrate what is not only your accomplishment but also your family's and your hometown's accomplishments. I truly believe the community that one grows up in shapes that person to be successful, so I want you all to go back home to your hometown and celebrate this accomplishment of medical school graduation with those special folks who could not be here to watch you make your dream come true.....

- whether it was that fifth grade teacher from Weston, FL who first told you that science was your best subject and to consider a career in that area...
- whether it was that freshman high school counselor from Lake Alfred, FL who believed from day one in your talents...
- whether it was the family practice doctor of Bartow, FL who first let you shadow and see patient care live...
- whether it was that eccentric high school biology teacher of Boynton Beach, FL who told you to pursue your gifts and follow a path to medicine...

- or whether it was that high school principal from Naples, FL who always told you to never give up on anything you truly wanted to achieve in your life...

...whomever was that person, go out and find them soon and include them in this celebration as they deserve to see your success come to life.

Go out and make us all proud, I have no doubt that you will.

And as Vice Admiral Nathan opened up that door to quotes from the 1980's, I will end this speech with one as well: " Your future Class of 2014 is so bright, that we all here have to wear shades"

Congratulations once again to you all!



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