



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

REMARKS ON CONFERRAL OF HONORARY DOCTORATE AND ADVICE TO GRADUATES

Presented by President Julio Frenk
at the University of South Florida Commencement Ceremony
May 5, 2017

Thank you, President Genshaft. I feel deeply grateful to receive this honor from such a dynamic institution of higher education and research.

Having devoted my own professional life to the pursuit of opportunities for all through better health and education, I have followed with great admiration the evolution of USF Health and, in particular, the College of Public Health. As the first college of public health in Florida, it is a truly pioneering institution with a powerful commitment to identifying and advancing innovative strategies to improve human health and well-being.

I would like to extend a personal note of appreciation to my friend and colleague, Donna Petersen, Dean of the College of Public Health. Dean Petersen is a recognized educational leader and an effective ambassador for this vocation that inspires so many of us.

To the Class of 2017 graduates, congratulations! Whether you are receiving your degree today from the Colleges of Pharmacy, Medicine, Nursing or Public Health, you have made an existential commitment to improving the human condition through your unique blend of knowledge, skills, experience, and compassionate care.

Your graduation coincides with a moment in human history that can be characterized with two words: change and complexity. In particular, health care is being shaped and challenged by unprecedented economic, technological, and social forces. It is changing from a system that rewards volume to one that rewards value; from care that is fragmented across highly specialized silos into care that is integrated across collaborative teams of health professionals. There is explosive development of new technologies, drugs, and procedures, and we are accountable for their ethical and equitable distribution and use.

Class of 2017, you are the reason why, even with all the uncertainty and disruptive changes we face in charting the future of health care, I remain fundamentally optimistic about our capacity to creatively address this increasingly complex set of challenges.

During the course of your education here at the University of South Florida, you have been exposed to some of the most intense and meaningful learning experiences possible. Each of you has found your own way of interpreting and pursuing your passion. And you have learned the most crucial skill of all: the ability to continue to learn throughout your lives and careers.

We all have different reasons why we decided to study the fields we have chosen. The facts may differ, but the dynamic is the same. We are moved to engage with—and transform—the larger world. What unites us is that we are all searching for our own meaning and redefining our own role in the world, and, yes, we are making a difference. Not because we are more skilled or experienced, but because we have the capacity to connect with others. This is what we do as health professionals.

President Theodore Roosevelt once said: “Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.”

As practitioners of the art of healing, your empathy for the pain and suffering of others—your ability to respond to that basic human need to know that someone cares—these will make you truly complete.

So, on this proud and memorable day, be confident that you are well prepared to play a transformative role in many lives. Remember, your graduation is not an end to your relationship with this great institution but rather a new chapter of what should be a lifelong relationship that will empower you to serve your communities by creating and applying knowledge with exquisite care for others and the world we live in.

Many thanks, again, for this honor, and all of my best wishes for success to all of you.