

Chancellor Michael F. Collins remarks
UMass Chan Medical School 51st Commencement
June 2, 2024

This is a hope filled moment!

At many important moments in life, we are embraced by hope. Today, for each of us, this is such a moment!

Standing before our graduates, at a ceremony during which we shall recognize and celebrate their many accomplishments, how could one be anything but filled with hope!

While current events: challenges brought by climate change; the increasing prevalence of health care inequities and disparities; or fears of war or repression serve to deplete, distract and dismay, it is the stark contrast of hope's authenticity, which provides a sustenance that is heartening, reassuring and uplifting.

Biomedical research brings hope to the human condition. And we know that hope fosters better health outcomes and increased longevity. Only with hope can dread and despair be dispelled and dismissed.

Years ago, our graduates realized their hope-filled dreams of continuing their education at UMass Chan. Their lives were bursting with accomplishment, ambition and aspiration, and not even pervasive pandemic restrictions, a reality of everyday life upon their matriculation, could dispel the sense of optimism shared by today's graduates.

Facing the limitless horizons of science yet to be explored, they pursued knowledge that could change the course of the history of disease. Guided by a committed and stellar faculty, those who, today, shall receive degrees in science, challenged frontiers within cellular structures and beyond, to unwind knowledge possessed within the genome. Their superior intellect remained focused on the wonders of science and the application of human understanding to bring hope, while ameliorating disease.

In the healing professions, our graduates embraced interprofessional education and a commitment to focused, patient-centric, team-based care that offers hope to those who are ill. Each graduate came to recognize that without hope, those for whom they had the privilege to care, would find it difficult to face even the most simple and mundane of daily tasks. But, with hope, patients are empowered and

enabled to face even the most daunting of treatments or procedures and to do so with an emboldened spirit and resilience.

For those of you who have known these graduates for a lifetime or have become endeared to them in more recent years, and for those of us for who have had the great privilege to steward their academic and professional careers, we have seen a marked transformation. For the unaccustomed, now, when they speak of their science, it may seem that they are speaking a new language. When describing their patient clinical encounters, it may seem as if they offer the impossible, especially when relating what can be done without invasive techniques or excessive morbidity. Clearly, it is a proud day for what these graduates can now accomplish.

Yes, at UMass Chan, we are most encouraged by what our graduates have become:

these graduates care about their communities and the world in which they live;

these learners are committed to continuing their education throughout a lifetime of service to others;

these scientists shall continuously pursue knowledge with the understanding that correcting the defect caused by even a single gene, could change the life of a child who otherwise shall face a diagnosis that could dash hope; and

these clinicians know the importance of primary care and that their diagnostic acumen enables them to assist those in greatest need and while doing so, assure those for whom hope is dim; cure those when such outcomes are possible; and care always for those where inequity and disparity causes or worsens disease, in our communities and beyond.

Throughout your time on our campus, you have watched as our new education and research building was constructed. Inside this bright and airy new space which we will open later this week, we shall be bringing together interdisciplinary research teams and learners, who, through their work, offer hope to the world. Maybe you, or someone you love, relies on such a spark of hope following a difficult diagnosis. Countless people around the world who are facing diseases for which there is currently no effective treatment or cure will find hope in the biomedical research that shall be conducted therein. Hope for a cure. Hope for a new discovery. Hope for more time.

In this hope-filled moment, we thank you for the trust you have placed in this faculty and in our institution. Please know that your trust brought us great confidence and enabled us to contribute to your professional aspirations.

I am confident that this group of graduates shall be the bright hope for professions that are saddled with complexity, bureaucracy and resource inadequacies, all of which are daunting the promise of tomorrow.

Knowing these graduates like we and you do, how could we be other than hope-filled? From their first day on this campus, I have proffered that what makes our professions special is that we recognize the privilege it is to care for those in need. We know that we are given the extraordinary opportunity to care for all, especially in moments of vulnerability and fear. Yet, we recognize that it is a privilege for us to care for those in need and not a privilege for those in need to be cared for by us. And while so doing, these graduates have come to hold the hands of their patients with esteem.

So, too, these graduates have come to know that there may come a day when all therapeutic options for their patients have been exhausted. In those moments, they will know that the greatest gift they can give their patients is to sit at the side of their beds and hold their hands.

With such hope, please know that now and forever, UMass Chan Medical School will take great pride in calling you one of our own.

It is with great hope in the goodness of each of you that we wish you Godspeed along your personal and professional journeys!