

COE Graduation Comments  
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Congratulations! With your graduation comes a new beginning and new opportunities. And yet, this traditional promise is overwhelmed by a world-wide, collective challenge: the coronavirus pandemic. The virus comes on the heels of big conversations about politics, climate change, inequality, and so much more.

And now you are graduating – and heading into a new phase of your life and place in this complicated and changing world. You probably thought your graduation would be a time for **Optimism and Hope**. And a party – a really BIG party.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks teaches, “Optimism and hope are not the same. Optimism is the belief that the world is changing for the better; hope is the belief that, together, we can *make* the world better.

So, here we are, together in a “Virtual” graduation ceremony, which will probably be followed by a virtual party. Right now, we might not feel very optimistic. We might not feel confident the world is changing for the better.

But I want to offer you encouragement. This IS a time for HOPE – the belief that, together, we can *make* the world better. Each of you are prepared to contribute to the future in powerful ways. You are leaders in education. You are leaders in health and wellness. You are leaders in science.

Over the last few weeks, I have seen people just like you – our educators, health professionals, and research scientists – respond to the pandemic with creativity and bravery. These stories give me hope.

We have witnessed educators throughout the country reinventing their work with extraordinary speed. Schools are the heart of our community, so the call to action was urgent! Teachers have quickly responded with creativity, passion, and commitment that has left us in awe.

Health and wellness professionals, such as those in public health, have been leading our nation through this unprecedented crisis. Never before has our

community been so acutely aware of the immense responsibility and power of public health to enhance the quality of life all over the world.

And scientists in fields like biomechanics, exercise science and athletic training have been working collaboratively to develop new devices and interventions that will change the world forever – whether creating life-saving devices to help during the pandemic or develop long-term preventions that leads to a happier and healthier life, these contributions to science are critical to a healthy future.

Each of you are receiving a credential – a degree in education, health, or the human sciences – that will provide you the opportunity improve our community and help guide us in a new direction. We all keep hearing – “Life will be different.” “We will have a new normal.” We don’t yet know HOW things will be different, but I am confident you are part of creating this new normal. You are an essential piece of the puzzle – this network of leaders – each with your own newly minted college degree, but also with each of your own unique life experiences, that will create a strong, committed, creative network that will define our “New Normal”.

I am inspired by a quote from Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation, an organization dedicated to building a more just and fair future for all. Darren has said: *In ordinary times, hope is rare. But in extraordinary times, hope is radical.* I invite you to be RADICAL. I invite you to commit to the radical, hard work of hope.

Like you, I will always remember today’s graduation as history making. You’re a special group of graduates. Which brings us back to the party. YOU deserve a BIG, SPECIAL party. So whether you do so virtually, with a small group of family and friends, or in the future – Congratulations & enjoy the celebration!

Now I’d like to introduce Jaclyn Taylor, who will speak on behalf of the College of Education, class of 2020. Jaclyn, #4 on the Maverick volleyball team, is a Summit League Academic Honor Roll recipient who is receiving her degree in Biomechanics. She will continue her studies to complete a doctoral degree in physical therapy.