

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Welcome. My name is Craig Wrenn and I'm a professor of pharmacology, and have the honor of serving as University Marshall. It is my formal responsibility to introduce our first speaker who will officially open the ceremony. Peggy Fisher serves as the chair of our board of trustees and is a 1970 graduate. This spring, Peggy celebrates her fiftieth class reunion. Throughout her time as an alumna, she has been a generous supporter of the university with her service and resources. Peggy is the first female chair of the university's governing board.

Thank you, Craig. It is my honor and pleasure to welcome all of you and to open this commencement ceremony. Today, each of you will join a long and distinguished list of Drake University graduates. Traditionally, the chair of the board welcomes graduates in the Knapp Center while wrapped in the pageantry of commencement. While we are unable to connect in person, we are connected by the Drake spirit and our shared values.

As Craig stated, this year, I celebrate 50 years as a Drake graduate. Throughout these years, I've witness the greatness and the coalescing power of Drake University. Today, as you all begin your next journey, I'm excited, proud, and optimistic for you and for the future of our great university. I want to now formally call this commencement ceremony to order, and it is my pleasure to present the president of Drake University, Marty Martin.

Hello. This weekend is a special occasion in the life of Drake University as we recognize and take pride in the academic accomplishments of the 835 individuals who are eligible to receive their undergraduate and graduate degrees. In addition, the Drake Law School is awarding 100 degrees to individuals earning a Juris doctorate, master of law, and master of jurisprudence, and the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences is awarding 136 degrees to individuals earning a doctorate of pharmacy or a doctorate of occupational therapy.

Today, we grant degrees to individuals who represent communities throughout Iowa, as well as 24 other states and 14 countries. In addition to our chair of the board, Peggy Fisher, and our marshall, Professor Craig Wrenn, participating in this virtual commencement are representatives from the administration and colleges and schools. These representatives include Sue Mattison, provost. Jerry Anderson, dean of the Law School. Randall Peters, interim dean of the School of Education.

Gesine Gerhard, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Renae Chesnut, dean of the College of

Pharmacy and Health Sciences. Dan Conley, dean for the College of Business and Public Administration. And Kathleen Richardson, dean of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

It is a tradition at Drake to focus our full attention on the graduates at our commencement ceremony, for it is they who will carry forward the obligations and responsibilities of leadership and citizenship as they leave our campus. However, I would also like to ask you to give special thanks to the faculty at the university for their contributions to the growth and development of the class of 2020. In our traditional ceremony, we would acknowledge our appreciation with a round of applause. However, today, I ask that you reflect on and recognize the impact faculty members have had in your collegiate experience.

Among today's graduates are individuals who have distinguished themselves by earning academic honors. Our commencement program captures and celebrates all those who have achieved these special academic recognitions. Well done. Congratulations. We are very proud of you.

So one of the privileges of being president of Drake University is that every December and May, I have the opportunity to offer a few brief remarks-- a few reflections to our graduating class. And of course, I'm getting to do so now under a very unique circumstance-- the challenge that we are confronting with the COVID-19 pandemic. And as I personally have gone through this, I could not help but reflect on the major public events that have impacted me in my 58 years on this planet. So if you'll allow me to review these, please.

I was born on December 16, 1961. In the summer of 1968, I was 6 years old on my way to first grade to remain in elementary school until the spring of 1974. And mine was a household that the evening news was always watched. And although it didn't make that much of an impression on me, my recollection of those years was, frankly, nothing but bad news. The height of the Vietnam War and its wind down. The Watergate investigation and proceedings in Congress. And then the resignation of President Nixon in the fall of 1974. Certainly, that has stuck with me.

So the next major public event that I recall having an impact on me was the Iran hostage crisis. Where for 444 days, from November of 1979 to January of 1981, Americans were held hostage in the US embassy in Tehran, Iran. Now, the seminal event of that occasion for me was the failed rescue effort in April of 1980. I was 18 years old, and I remember my 18-year-old self thinking, being sure we were going to go to war. Indeed, I remember having that conversation with my mother.

A few years later, October 19, 1987-- Black Monday. The Dow Jones Industrial average declined by over 21% in a single day, triggering a global stock market decline. I had just graduated from law

school that May. Gotten married in September. I was at home waiting for my bar results to come in to see if I was going to be able to join the United States Air Force. A few days later, they did, and I started my active duty service just three weeks later.

And then 9/11. September the 11th, 2001. On that morning, I was in a jury service room in Fort Worth, Texas waiting to be processed for jury service along with hundreds of others when all of a sudden, phones started ringing and buzzing, and I caught snippets of conversations that didn't make any sense to me. We were then really quickly abruptly, dismissed-- not told why, but dismissed.

I went back to the law school where I was teaching at that time and heard from a student what had happened. And then, of course, like all other Americans, spent the next number of days just watching over and over the video of those planes crashing into the twin towers. And I do recall, no planes in the skies for days. No airplanes in the skies for days. I was in Dallas, Fort Worth, and it was such a ubiquitous thing in that community, but they were gone.

And then, of course, the great recession. Started in late 2007, ran into 2009. The aftermath, much longer than that. But the one event in the midst of that that I distinctly recall was Warren Buffett being interviewed on Charlie Rose in October of 2008. And he was making the announcement that he just made major investments in General Electric and Goldman Sachs. He was explaining what had happened. What he saw coming. And in some sense, he was telling us it was going to be OK.

Now, of course, we find ourselves confronted with this global pandemic with the spread of COVID-19. Now, one message I perhaps could convey to you after go into that recitation of events is that this, too, shall pass. We will get through COVID-19 like we did all the events I've recited above and the many others I haven't called out because we are resilient. Because we have proven that we can get through these types of challenges.

And while this is certainly true, it can't be the end of our consideration of where we find ourselves at this time in history. Because as I recite this to you, over 1 million Americans have been infected with at least 60,000 deaths. Over 3 million have been infected around the globe with more than 220,000 deaths.

So while saying that this too shall pass is accurate, it's not sufficient. It's far more important for us to reflect on it and to consider, how do we behave in the midst of this crisis, and who will we be when we get to the other side?

So how do we behave? If there is a silver lining to this pandemic, it is that the best way to combat it is

for each of us to be our best selves. To be diligent about observing those practices that are proven to mitigate the spread of the virus-- social distancing and hygiene. To look for opportunities to help others who are confronted with daunting challenges created by COVID-19.

To contribute to food banks. To make masks. To reach out to people who are at increased risk and thus significantly isolated. To thank others who are putting themselves at risk to enable us to get groceries and other essential products and services. And to bear witness. To bear witness to the heroic efforts of our medical professionals that save lives at the great risk to their own. Being patient and caring for others are the most potent tools each of us possess to do our part to combat COVID-19.

So who are we going to be when we get to the other side of this? You know, the coronavirus doesn't distinguish one of us from the other. We are all just human beings. It sees a human being and it attacks. We are all just host to it. The many ways that we draw distinctions between ourselves are irrelevant to COVID-19, whether those distinctions be drawn around nationality, race, religion, ethnicity, geography, class. The list goes on.

COVID-19 does not see any of those things. Now, I'm not saying that these are or should be irrelevant. These distinctions, these ways of identifying ourselves. Indeed, there is power and meaning in many of these identities, and that's to be celebrated.

But I am saying that for me, this experience of the coronavirus should call us all to be more, not less, open to others. To be more, not less, committed to building connections and relationships across boundaries however they are defined. To be more, not less, kind to each other in our daily lives. To see all of those near and far for what they are-- a fellow human being deserving of respect, dignity, and support.

To our graduates. If I go back to my list that I recited at the beginning of my remarks, each of those is a defining event in someone's life. Indeed, some of those are defining events across multiple lives. And indeed, if you go back particularly to the Vietnam War for those who are 5, 10, 15 years older than me, that was most likely the defining public event of their life.

Now, it may be the case that this global pandemic will be the defining event of your life. It will certainly be a defining event. And it presents great challenge to all of us, to include yourselves. But I am confident that each of you are up to the challenge. This celebration that we are holding right now, that you are witnessing, this celebration, is in recognition of your most recent major accomplishment. And it stacks on those that have come before that were necessary to put you in this

place at this time.

You have proven that you have the drive, the talent, the intellect, the resilience, to push through obstacles and to get it done. We need you now to bring all of that to bear. Not just right now. Certainly that is necessary, but particularly as we, in the months ahead, come out of this pandemic. We have an opportunity to use this experience to make this a better world. And you have the power, you have the talent, you have the capacity to be a powerful force in that effort. And I charge you to do just that. Thank you.

I now call upon Provost Mattison who will introduce the deans of the colleges and schools for the presentation of the degree candidates. Thank you, President Martin. First, I want to extend a heartfelt congratulations to our graduates and their families for the hard work and many accomplishments that have brought you to this day.

While commencement and the world looked different this year, I'm filled with hope about the future you will create. I've observed how you have embraced and conquered challenges head on with the responsibility and drive to further the common good. Graduates, your future is bright. May you go forth with determination and continue to shape the world.

Now, without further ado, I call upon the deans to present the degree candidates for their colleges or schools. Dean Jerry Anderson of the law school will now present the candidates of that school.

Will the candidates from the Law School who are earning the degrees of Juris Doctorate, Master of Law, and Master of Jurisprudence please rise and remain standing? On behalf of the law school, I am pleased to present the candidates for their degrees. They have completed their requirements and are all entitled to receive their degree.

Interim Dean Randall Peters of the School of Education will now present the candidates of that school.

Will the candidates from the School of Education who are earning the degree Bachelor of Science in Education, Specialist in Education, Master of Science, Master of Science and Education, Master of Science in Teaching, Master of Arts in Teaching, Doctor of Philosophy, and Doctor of Education please rise and remain standing? On behalf of the faculty of the school, I am pleased to present the candidates for their degrees. They have completed their requirements, and all are titled to receive their degree.

Dean Gesine Gerhard of the College of Arts and Sciences will now present the candidates of that college.

Will the candidates from the College of Arts and Sciences who are earning the degree Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Music Education, Bachelor of Science, and Master of Science please rise and remain standing? On behalf of the faculty of the college, I am pleased to present the candidates for their degrees. They have completed their requirements, and all are entitled to receive their degree.

Dean Renae Chesnut of the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences will now present the candidates of that college.

Will the candidates from the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences who are earning the degrees Bachelor of Science, Doctor of Occupational Therapy and Doctor of Pharmacy please rise and remain standing? On behalf of the faculty of the college, I am pleased to present the candidates for their degrees. They have completed their requirements, and all are entitled to receive their degree.

Dean Dan Connolly of the College of Business and Public Administration will now present the candidates of that college.

Will the candidates from the College of Business and Public Administration who are earning the degree of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Master of Accounting, Master of Business Administration, Master of Financial Management, Master of Data Analytics, and Master of Public Administration please rise and remain standing? On behalf of the faculty of the college, I am pleased to present the candidates for their degrees. They have completed their requirements, and all are entitled to receive their degree.

Dean Kathleen Richardson of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication will now present the candidates of that school.

Will the candidates from the school of Journalism and Mass Communication who are earning the degrees Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication, Master of Communication Leadership, and Master of Arts in Communication please rise and remain standing? On behalf of the faculty of the school, I am pleased to present the candidates for their degrees. They have completed their requirements, and all are entitled to receive their degree.

President Martin, the faculties and deans of the colleges and schools of Drake University have certified the candidates as having fulfilled the requirements for their courses of study. It is my sincere

honor and privilege to recommend that you confer degrees for which these candidates are now qualified.

Well, I hope you are all still standing. Drake University Board of Trustees has authorized me to confer upon you graduates these academic degrees for which you have been recommended. Now, therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the board of trustees of Drake University, I hereby confer upon each of you that degree which you have earned and admit you to all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities pertaining thereto, in token whereof you will receive the appropriate diploma.

Now is the time traditionally for graduates to move the tassels on your caps from right to left. Today, under these circumstances, there are too few caps and too few tassels. However, in this virtual experience, I'm asking each of you to imagine moving your tassel from right to left. You have earned this moment, and nothing should prevent you from this significant milestone.

Next, I would like to ask you as our graduates to recognize and express your appreciation to the parents, grandparents, spouses, children, and other family members and friends whose sacrifices and love have been so instrumental in your lives. On behalf of our faculty, staff, and our campus community, thank you to this powerful support group for your loving and tireless commitment to these remarkable individuals.

I now call upon Steve Berry who holds a Bachelor's Degree from the College of Liberal Arts and a Juris Doctor from Drake Law School to give the alumni welcome.

On behalf of the Drake National Alumni Board, I want to congratulate all of you on becoming alumni of Drake University. It's a pretty selective club, and all of you are now members. I'm sure you've heard the saying that the only constant in life is change. And as you move on from your college experience at Drake, change is going to happen real fast.

After this current crisis is over, some of you will be moving into new careers or searching for one. Some will attend grad school. Some of you will move on to new cities or countries, and some will be getting married and having a family. Others of you may chuck the whole damn thing and go work on a fishing trawler in Jamaica.

Yes, you are all in store for a lot of change in your life. And my advice to you is, don't fight it. Change is going to happen whether you want it to or not. But one thing that will never change-- and this is the point of my 2 minutes here. One thing that will never change is your connection with this university.

You will always be a Drake grad. You will always carry with you the memories that you created here, the friendships you nurtured here, the education that you received here.

And what I'm asking of you today is to keep that connection alive. What you've accomplished here at Drake over the past four or five years, some of you seven or eight, has allowed you to join this exclusive club of Drake alumni. But from here forward, the alumni who have preceded you are asking you to be not only alumni of Drake but ambassadors for Drake. We ask you to champion your alma mater. Promote and campaign for your alma mater.

And when you are in a position to do so, give back to your alma mater with your time, your talent, and your resources in order to continue to move this university to even greater heights. Keep that connection alive. It's the one constant you've got in a sea of change. And I hope you enjoy and embrace all the changes that are in store for you as new alumni of Drake University. And once you are all released from this quarantine, I encourage you to get out there and change the world.

This now concludes our formal virtual commencement ceremony for May of 2020. Please continue watching to enjoy a video celebrating your collective accomplishments and the power of a lifelong relationship with Drake University. Finally, you're also encouraged to continue celebrating your achievements through our class of 2020 social media campaign. Congratulations, class of 2020. We are all so very, very proud of each and every one of you.