

***Class of 2021 Commencements***

*May 28-29, 2021, Delaware Stadium*

Hello, Blue Hens! What a wonderful day to graduate!

I am so happy to see you! And I am thrilled that we could be together — here in person and online — with your families and your friends. I have truly missed these special campus events, and I know you have, too.

It's been a challenging time for all of us. And your experience at UD has been unlike any other in the 278-year history of our institution. Reaching this moment has required an incredible level of perseverance, not only in your academic commitments but also in your identity as a Blue Hen. It was your indomitable spirit and your constant drive to succeed that helped you overcome unprecedented obstacles.

Together, you share a unique bond as the University of Delaware Class of 2021!

Let me be among the first to congratulate you on reaching this milestone in your lives. Well done!

So many of you have distinguished yourselves through your academic and research pursuits ... through your community service ... through your athletic accomplishments, and in so many other ways. And you did it while the world around you was changing moment by moment. On behalf of your professors and the entire staff and administration of the University, I want to say how proud we are of you ... and how inspired we are by your true Blue Hen spirit.

I want to recognize the hard work of all of our graduates, throughout your time at UD. As I call on your group, please stand and remain standing. And please hold your applause until the end.

If your academic achievements earned you a scholarship or award, please stand up.

If you studied in another country, or if you worked with a professor on a research project, please stand.

If you transformed a great idea into a business or a nonprofit, or if you helped your community during these challenging times through a service organization or UDance, please stand.

If you were a proud Blue Hen student-athlete, please stand.

In case there's anyone left sitting, I've got one more: If you ever pulled an all-nighter to finish a project or prepare for a big test, please stand!

Let's give all of our excellent graduates a big round of applause!

Okay, clearly you worked hard, so you can sit down now.

As you reflect on everything you have learned and accomplished at UD, I hope you will notice that your greatest moments were probably associated with your greatest challenges ... times when you were faced with a complex problem that seemed impossible to solve. There have certainly been a lot of those lately.

And I hope that you continue to draw on the skills, the values and the mindset that carried you through those challenges.

You have shown that you are resilient. You had to adapt — quickly and repeatedly — to stay on the path to success that led you here today. You demonstrated admirable endurance and fortitude, reaching deep inside yourself to draw on a strength that maybe you didn't even know you possessed.

You will no doubt face many more challenges in your lives, and now you know that you have the determination and resolve to overcome them.

And you reached this moment together. You worked in teams ... collaborating to combine your knowledge and abilities to achieve far more than you could by yourselves. You sought the wisdom of your mentors to help guide you and encourage you along the way.

Most impressive, I know that you sacrificed to protect the health and safety of those around you — not only your friends and families but everyone in our community. I am truly grateful for everything you did to support and care for one another.

Indeed, I believe we have all felt a renewed sense of gratitude in our lives. We saw how quickly our circumstances and our expectations can change, sometimes for the better. We've learned to appreciate the good things we have, and we are reminded that we all have the power to advocate for reform, when it is needed.

In many ways, the lessons you have learned — about resilience, teamwork and gratitude — have uniquely prepared you — the Class of 2021 — to succeed.

The world is changing rapidly, and you've shown that you can change with it.

Our society needs new ways of thinking, and you possess an innovative spirit.

And we need to take care of each other — something you have demonstrated throughout your time at UD.

I want you to keep educating your mind, and your heart, because, as Aristotle said, knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom. To know yourself is to believe in yourself ... to believe in the limitless possibilities ahead ... and to seize the opportunities where you can truly make a difference in the world.

Above all, if you persevere ... you work together ... and you appreciate what you have and what needs to change ... you are unstoppable.

We — your families, your friends, your professors and everyone here at the University of Delaware — believe in you.

I am extremely optimistic about the future knowing that our Class of 2021 will be out there changing the world!

Congratulations! You are Blue Hens forever!

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