

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE CLASS OF 2022 COMMENCEMENT — MAY 28, 2022

PRESIDENT DENNIS ASSANIS

Thank you, Provost Morgan.

Provost Morgan is going to graduate and enjoy retirement in a couple of weeks after 37 years as a faculty member, leader and loyal supporter of the University, so let's give her a big round of applause!

Well, good morning, Blue Hens! Let me be among the first to congratulate you, the amazing Class of 2022 ... the best class to ever graduate from the University of Delaware! Well done!

You picked a beautiful and memorable day to graduate.

The weather could not have been nicer after yesterday's storm, and this is the first time we've had an entire graduating class together for a Commencement ceremony since 2019. I'm so glad that we could all be here for this day.

And, of course, this is also the first time in UD history that we've had a sitting President of the United States as our guest speaker!

Indeed, it's a great day to be a Blue Hen. And I hope that you are as eager and optimistic about the future as I am today.

I know that our world is facing significant challenges right now: the pandemic ... climate change and natural disasters ... racial and economic inequality ... disagreements and conflicts here and abroad, and even more tragically, gun violence and war, leading to loss of innocent lives. Often, it seems that our values and the very principles of purpose and truth — the foundation of your UD education — are under attack.

But I also know — deep in my heart — that you, the Class of 2022, will rise to these challenges. Albert Einstein once said that “we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” And that's where you come in ... we need your thinking, your creativity, your diligence, and your passion in this world.

You've demonstrated that you know how to think critically and communicate ... to cooperate and collaborate ... to explore and innovate ... to speak up whenever and wherever you see injustice.

So many of you have distinguished yourselves through your academic achievements, research pursuits and service to others — students like Cullen Kisner, who earned this year's highest grade-point index, and the recipients of the Warner and Taylor Awards for outstanding seniors, Valerie Light and Jonathan Martin.

And so many of you succeeded as student-athletes this year. Five of our teams — Women's Field Hockey, Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, Women's Softball and Men's Lacrosse — won their conference championships, and four of them competed in the NCAA Tournament. Way to go, Blue Hens!

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 you earned a scholarship or award because of your academic achievements ... please stand.

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.

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 indomitable spirit that has helped you overcome unprecedented challenges over the past few years.

And this is why we are counting on you! I believe that the University of Delaware Class of 2022 is uniquely prepared to help solve today's problems.

You've seen how quickly everything can change ... and you developed the flexibility to adapt just as quickly.

You've faced tremendous obstacles and sudden detours along your path ... and you learned to navigate them to reach your goals, which is why you're sitting here right now at Commencement.

And you've seen dramatic reminders that we all depend on one another for our safety and wellbeing ... so your compassion and your commitment to service has grown commensurately.

From the moment you came to the University of Delaware, you've been known as the Fightin' Blue Hens. But today, you are a new breed ... of extraordinarily resilient Blue Hens — feisty, fearless and determined to succeed at whatever you choose to do.

Whether that's a career, military service, further education or some other option, I encourage you to continue to build on your UD experience and see education as a lifelong pursuit.

In fact, to get you started, I want you to learn the Greek word "areté."

President Biden, you might recall that I spoke of “arete” during my inauguration as UD president, which you were so gracious to attend. Today, I want to refer to it again because of its meaning and relevance to our graduating class.

“Areté” is a word that has transcended ancient Greek history, from the times of the Greek poet Homer to the famous philosophers, Aristotle and Plato. It means the constant drive for virtue and excellence.

In every aspect of life — every opportunity you pursue, every challenge you confront — always remember to choose the virtuous path and do everything to the best of your ability. I hope you will make “areté” one of the guiding principles of your lives.

As you sit here today, your future is full of endless possibilities and exciting opportunities to truly make a difference in the world. I want all of you to bring your unwavering ideas, your versatile skills, and your inexhaustible energy to whatever you choose to pursue, beginning today.

Where will your career take you?

Will you dream up the next big idea that changes the world?

Will you be the second Blue Hen to become President of the United States?

We — your families, your friends, your fellow alumni and everyone here at the University of Delaware — can’t wait to find out.

You are resilient ... you are unstoppable ... you are Blue Hens forever!

I am extremely optimistic about the future knowing that you – the Class of 2022 - will be out there changing the world!

Congratulations, Class of 2022!

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