

9 June 2016 UCLA Doctoral Hooding Ceremony Keynote

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It is a great privilege for me to speak with you today. This year, 770 students will earn their doctorates from UCLA. Congratulations!

To the graduates: On behalf of all UCLA faculty, I want to express our boundless delight and pride in all you have accomplished at our great university.

As teachers: you've inspired your students.

As scholars, you've forged new paths,
pushed back the frontiers of knowledge,
and brought distinction to yourselves and to UCLA.

To the many friends and family members: Welcome! We are so happy that you are here today to celebrate the culmination of your student's graduate career: the conferral of the doctoral degree. Congratulations to all of you!

Let's first take this opportunity thank the many people here who have given our graduates their love and support: the parents, partners, spouses, siblings, children, mentors, friends, and other important people.

Your support has taken many forms: financial, emotional, time, and personal sacrifice....

May I ask all of those who are being hooded today to please stand, turn around, look to someone who is here for you, and say "thank you".

Let's all give them a round of applause.

Thank you. Please be seated.

A few weeks ago, I was sifting through ideas about what I might share with you today. Perhaps something about global warming. Or this historic election year. Or perhaps I could offer a metaphor relating your doctoral degree journey to a vision in the cave of the three-eyed raven.

But in light of last week's events, I set aside my notes.

You know, except for a few faculty and staff who were here in Westwood in 1968, before nearly all of you and maybe even some of your parents were born, none of us had ever experienced

--terrifying uncertainty and violence right here on our campus.

--tragedy and disbelief that an accomplished student and promising graduate had felt compelled to cut two lives short, and then take his own.

--the profound sadness over our loss of Professor William Klug. He was a dedicated, talented and beloved professor. In addition to mentoring numerous master's and doctoral students, he served on the UCLA Graduate Council, dedicating his time to improving academic programs and the experiences of graduate students across the campus.

And then we saw our community come together. Everyone! Faculty, students and staff, friends and family, joined in solidarity to give one another solace, and to say, once again, let there be light.

Together-- last week in a somber moment, but today with joy -- we celebrate the life of the mind, the drive to create, the passion for discovery, the community of faculty and students as teachers and scholars. The value of the UCLA family.

We are united in our shared pursuits, and in our belief that learning, questioning and probing, speaking and writing and performing, challenging and provoking, are valuable: not only to us, but to our communities and to our society.

You have already heard about the accomplishments of two of our outstanding graduates, Alice Helene Mandell and Maria Yefimova, who served as today's student marshals. I'd like to tell you a little about three others who were nominated for this honor.

William Purdy is receiving his PhD in Education today. William undertook an analysis of the early history of UCLA, from 1919 through 1938, in the context of the then-existing private colleges (USC, Pomona, Occi and Caltech), the 1918 flu pandemic, and the ambitious real estate developers who planned Westwood and shaped the surrounding neighborhoods. William's work sheds light on UCLA's birth from the Los Angeles State Normal School, through our adolescent years as the University of California, "Southern Branch." And I'll remind you that in back in 1923, Charles Lipman, who was Dean of Berkeley's Graduate Division, told one of our UCLA faculty, and I quote, "They will never, never, **NEVER** offer graduate work on the Los Angeles Campus." Well, here we are. Just saying... Congratulations, William!

Colin Joseph Gleason is receiving his PhD in Geography. He set out to develop a holistic understanding of surface water in the world. Through fieldwork, satellite remote sensing, and modeling, Colin compiled information about the ways rivers shape *and are shaped* by the landscape, and used that knowledge to develop a new methodology for estimating river discharge. Colin's work can support better water management in the context of population growth, global industrialization and climate change. Congratulations, Colin!

Ruth Whitney Ellingsen is receiving her PhD in Psychology. Ruth investigated the factors that promote positive parenting in the face of poverty, child developmental disabilities and other risk factors. She found that optimism and resilience play key

roles in positive parenting, and she now plans to develop and evaluate resources that can help build parenting strengths, and thereby improve support and outcomes for children and families facing very difficult challenges. Thank you and congratulations, Ruth!

Faculty, family members and friends, more than 300 of this year's UCLA doctoral degree recipients are here today. Each has a similar story of exceptional accomplishments, hard won and richly deserved.

We join here today both to reflect and to celebrate.

Graduates: I and my colleagues on the stage are proud of you, of course! But we are also grateful, because it has been a privilege to be your teachers and mentors, your coaches and cheerleaders.

We are truly fortunate to have watched and helped *you* reach this milestone.

Now, it is *possible* that there were moments, maybe more than a few, where you felt that much – perhaps too much – was being asked of you. You muscled through, persevered, you met and often exceeded our expectations. Well done!

Today, we would ask just one MORE thing of you. *We ask you to pay it forward.*

Many of you will go on to careers as faculty and researchers, others will pursue careers in industry or nonprofits, or become entrepreneurs or artists, and many are, or will become, moms and dads.

Whatever your path, please *keep in mind* not only your personal goals and milestones: getting the next grant or getting tenure, your promotion or the next recital.... But consider also how you can help those who follow: the students and colleagues and children who will look to YOU for inspiration, or professional advice, or mentoring.

Please take time to be kind, to listen, to guide, or to help in other ways whenever you can. And do so in a spirit of gratitude, with the knowledge that for each and every one of us, our true legacy and impact on the world is through those whom we have known, heard, helped and loved.

Graduates: our hearts are filled with joy and hope and love for every one of you.

Congratulations from the entire UCLA community! We can't wait to see what you do next.

Let there be light!