

13 June 2018 UCLA Doctoral Hooding Ceremony Keynote

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It is a great privilege for me to speak with you today. This year, nearly 700 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 in the process, you have brought distinction to yourselves, and to UCLA.

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

Let's take this opportunity to thank the many people who have given our graduates their love and support: the parents, the partners and spouses, the siblings and children, the grandparents, cousins and aunts, and the dear friends. And also --- the teachers and mentors – like those who sit behind me, beaming with pride.

Their 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 and look to someone who is here for you today, and say "thank you." Let's all give them a round of applause.

Thank you. Please be seated.

Today's UCLA doctoral degree recipients have engaged in extraordinary scholarship, made pioneering discoveries, and created work of great aesthetic value. You were introduced to two of them already, our student marshals NAKO and ERIC. I'd like to say a little about several more graduates whose dissertation research is remarkable in its innovation, breadth and significance.

Tyler Ross Harlan will be awarded his PhD in Geography. Tyler studied the impact of introducing small hydropower facilities in rural China. Hydroelectric power is a so-called "green" technology, as it doesn't require burning fossil fuels. He found that while its introduction can alleviate local poverty, it can also result in significant environmental damage, as it enables mining, deforestation, and other high-carbon producing industries. Tyler's research shows that energy policies need to take into account these broader impacts. Congratulations, Tyler, on your highly relevant research.

Janet Charray Buckner has earned her PhD in Biology. After centuries of scientific research, you might think there is nothing new to learn about evolution and the classification of animals into phylogenetic trees. Not so! Janet used modern genome sequencing methods to classify two extinct species of ducks, placing them into the phylogeny of living species. Janet also reconstructed the biogenetic history of marmosets and tamarins. Thank you for advancing our understanding of the natural world, Janet.

Aidan Seale-Feldman will earn her PhD in Anthropology. An ethnographer, Aidan studied the psychosocial impact and the response to the massive 2015 earthquake in Nepal. She conceptualized "*the work of disaster*" as a way to frame what was generated and what was destroyed, what was accomplished and what was foreclosed, and the processes by which affliction was made visible or rendered invisible. Natural disasters are inevitable, and her work helps us understand our reactions, our responses and how we can support mental health and the recovery of our communities. Congratulations Aidan.

And lastly: **Marissa Ashley Stevens** is receiving her PhD in Near-Eastern Languages and Cultures. Her work examined the funerary papyri of Egypt in the 21st Dynasty, 1000 years BC. Her scholarship has revealed how material objects can reflect, shape, sustain or change our social identities, both as individuals and in groups. This past April, Marissa explained her work – and its relevance to our modern, materialistic, social-media-driven world – at Grad Slam, the UCLA competition in which graduate students present their research in just 3-minutes. Her terrific talk earned Marissa the title of 2018 UCLA Grad Slam Champion. Congratulations Marissa!

Each of the nearly 300 doctoral students who will be hooded today has a similar story of exceptional accomplishments, hard won and richly deserved. Bravo!

This is my seventh doctoral hooding ceremony as Dean, and it is the day I look forward to the most each year. This is because I've had a chance to meet many of you:

- To see your exhibitions and performances;
- To talk with you at salons and poster sessions;
- To hear your exit seminars and Grad Slam presentations;
- And to work with the leaders student government campus organizations.

You are all so articulate, committed, and just fabulous. And having earned your UCLA doctoral degrees, you are important *as never before*. Why? Because:

- You understand there is a difference between facts and “alternative” facts.
- You have heard diverse voices and perspectives, and know that they matter.
- You know that science helps us understand the world, and enables us to steward it for future generations;

- You recognize that engineers and entrepreneurs contribute enormously to technological progress, our quality of life, and an economy that creates benefits that are widely shared;
- You grasp that the arts are inspiring, enlightening, and *essential* to life;
- And from your lived experience, you appreciate that rigorous scholarship, vigorous discussions and debate, and thoughtful compromise are the tools for establishing consensus and developing a shared sense of purpose;
- And you can see that attention must be paid, by each and every one of us, to advancing basic human rights, including access to safe food, affordable housing, essential healthcare, and quality education.

So, graduates, on this commencement day, I challenge you – as accomplished and prepared intellectuals, as problem solvers and as agents of change – to lead by example, through what you have done here at UCLA AND what you will do tomorrow. You know that progress in our society is based on knowledge, discovery, discourse, thoughtfulness and empathy, and a *willingness* to wrestle with complex, multi-sided questions that cannot be answered by just one person, or just one side.

So I challenge you to commit to paying forward the benefits that you have already accrued from your education at UCLA, and that will ensue as you advance in your career. Our university, community, state and nation need not just what you have to offer, but *what you are willing to give*.

Graduates: I speak for all of us on the stage in saying that it has been a privilege to be your teachers and mentors, your coaches and cheerleaders. We are truly fortunate to have worked with you and helped *you* reach this milestone. You have powered through plateaus and barriers, persevered, and have met and often exceeded our expectations. And now, here you are. Well done!

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, and Go Bruins!