

**Chancellor Michael F. Collins**  
**UMass Medical School Commencement Address**  
**June 4, 2017**

It is a special privilege each commencement day to have the opportunity to offer a few final thoughts to our graduates and the community of family and friends that has gathered to support them.

Our faculty and students continue to demonstrate their keen intellect, compassion and innovation skills as they receive numerous accolades for their scholarly contributions.

Could I ask the members of our faculty who are present today, to rise and be recognized?

Could it be that the moment for you to graduate is before us? Today is the day!

It seems as if it was just a moment ago that you arrived, full of idealism and enthusiasm; ready to learn, innovate and care.

How remarkable it is that, today, full of anticipation and excitement, you take the next steps along your journey, embarking from Worcester, on careers about which you have hoped and dreamed for years.

Trust me, for each of us for whom it has been a privilege to participate in your education, it seems as if it was just yesterday that we, too, set off on our own paths.

We know, with a certainty gained through the wisdom that accompanies experience, that marvelous journeys await you. Your careers shall be replete with purpose and possibility.

Many of us, though none of you, were teens when this health sciences university was conceived and constructed. We are a proven, solid investment, a state government success story. Look what we have become!

At our next-generation medical school, in an open, curious and friendly environment, smart minds, great science and genuine collegiality set us apart.

We are number one in New England for primary care and in the top 10 percent nationally: acknowledgements that demonstrate prestige and fidelity to our founding mission.

Total annual research awards have climbed to \$280 million and, for the first time, we have joined the top 30 institutions in the nation for National Institutes of Health funding; we now rank 29th, with almost \$150 million in NIH grants, a recognition that heralds the intellect and commitment of our faculty who have made such impressive gains in an era of intense competition, and who continue to strive to solve what was once considered unsolvable.

Our colleagues at MassBiologics, throughout its 100-year history, have created more than 100 million doses of medicines that have been administered across the globe, and continue the development of biologics for diseases like rabies and pertussis to treat those greatest in need.

Commonwealth Medicine has saved billions of dollars for Massachusetts, all the while serving the social service and health care needs of those who are less fortunate among us.

This year, the shadow of our medical school footprint across our state has become enlarged as we have initiated clinical affiliations with Cape Cod Healthcare in Hyannis and Baystate Health in Springfield, the home of our new regional campus that will admit its first students this fall.

With great pride, we now welcome the VA to our campus, so that veterans from central Massachusetts can have greater access to health care. We recognize the privilege it is to care for our veterans; as they have given so much so that we may be free.

Furthermore, our alumni, whom you shall join in a short few moments, practice in more than 170 communities in our commonwealth and make contributions to the more than 250 communities in which they reside. They play a most important role in fulfilling the health care and civic needs of our fellow citizens.

With that knowledge in tow, now you embark upon a pathway of promise that is lighted with optimism, encouragement, confidence and hope.

Each of you has brought your goodness and kindness to our midst. Our knowledge of your acumen preceded you, but it was your "miles traveled" that most attracted us to you.

You represent the global talent pool, which enriches our campus. No wall could diminish that attraction nor deter aspiring students, trainees and faculty from being welcomed to our singular academic community. Rest assured that the boundaries of our institution shall be safe for those who come here to learn, to innovate, to train, and to care.

You have brought diversity of all kinds to our midst. We are greater as a community for the richness of your experience and thought. We are emboldened by the courage of your convictions. By no means are we satisfied that we are diverse enough or that we have addressed adequately the health care disparities and income inequality that continue to exist. While our work continues, please know that you have been a force for good, for progress and for equality and inclusion. You have brought gifts to us that we shall forever treasure.

As your pathway leads you from us today, be assured that you are not alone on your future journey.

Along the way, remember that the assimilation of your minds and your hearts makes you so special.

As you continue on a journey of lifelong learning, know that those who shall be your colleagues and mentors care with you and about you.

Take a moment each day to hold the hands of those whose care is entrusted to you; do not be afraid to hold the hand of a colleague when you, or they, are in need; be assured that the hands of those who come before you in our professions are available to embrace you; and when all medical, nursing and scientific expertise has been applied, please know that there may come the time when simple acts of kindness and touch shall be the tincture that matters most.

Each of you is about to be accorded the privilege of a lifetime: the privilege to care for those most in need or to discover the cure that shall change the course of the history of their disease.

Be mindful that all are not as fortunate as are we. Maintain a preferential option for the poor, the vulnerable and the voiceless in our midst and you shall be fulfilled.

There's no limit to what you can do. With each and every action, as you seek the elimination of disease or promote the health of global populations; you shall make progress on many fronts, every day. Each day, wake up thinking, "Today could be the day!"

Today is your day.

Remember always, we will watch with great anticipation as you embark upon your pathway of promise, and that we shall always take pride in calling you one of our own.

It has been a wonderful privilege to serve as your chancellor over this past decade.

Congratulations!