

Dr. Gail Russell
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Remarks to Graduate Commencement
UMass Dartmouth
May 23, 2009

Good afternoon Chancellor McCormack, Distinguished Guests, and Faculty Colleagues. And congratulations to the graduating Class of 2009 and their families and loved ones.

I have been asked to speak to you on this day of celebration as a representative of the UMD faculty. We are the folks that steeped you in the tradition and wisdom of your chosen discipline;

We trained you in the techniques of the practice and the art of your discipline and its research methods;

We measured your growth and progress toward this day; and

We probably caused you more than a little bit of stress and frustration along the way.

Today, we, your faculty, share in your joy and your sense of accomplishment. Tomorrow we welcome you as partners and colleagues in the work that is still unfinished, and to the challenges – known and unknown – of the future.

For my nurse colleagues in the Class of 2009 – that work includes: dealing with the increasing burden of chronic illness, with emerging diseases, and with disparities in health status;

That work is translating the many wonderful advances in science and technology into the acts of caring for people when they are sick and at their most vulnerable;

That work is embracing the increasing complexity in our systems of care and the diversity among our patients and professional colleagues; and

That work is containing the escalating costs of health care while preserving access to high quality care.

That will keep us busy for a while! A guarantee of employment!

For those of you in other fields -- I do not know the specific opportunities and challenges that await you, but I do know that they are ... and will continue to be... many and great.

I also know that you are among the elite, the best prepared people to meet these challenges and to create our future. Mark Twain offered these wise words.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

Remember as you set sail that your knowledge and talent are your passports for this journey.

Remember that your creativity and hard work will build a world that many of us cannot even imagine and will not live to see.

Remember that your dignity as an individual, your humanity, the integrity of your mind, spirit and principle will make your work relevant and important.

Choose this journey of discovery. Fill your future with adventure. Become a fully enfranchised citizen of world.

Good luck and God speed on this wonderful journey.