

**University of California, San Diego
Commencement Address – 2006 Charter Class
*“Leaving a Legacy”***

Distinguished members of the platform party, parents, siblings, spouses and friends of the graduates, and mostly, the twenty-four members of the University of California at San Diego, College of Pharmacy, Charter Class of 2006, what a great honor it is to be here with you all today....as we celebrate this monumental occasion. Today, we celebrate YOU--The Charter Class of 2006. You've been on a fantastic journey, and what a tremendous learning and social experience it has been.

I understand there were some challenges in the second year! I also saw a lot of love among the charter class members and faculty, which is a very special bond. And, I observed that the parents weren't so bad after all. Mr. Ali Rezaei and your father, would you please turn off your phones. Mr. Dibbini, I'm giving the speech today! So now...for the next two hours, listen up!!

Allow me for a couple of minutes to continue the charter class journey, as I invite you to take a ride with me into our collective imaginations.

Now, IMAGINE.

Imagine living in a world where your life is not your own. Your rights are at the mercy of others, and your thoughts and worth are not honored. Your dignity has been taken away. Until one day you decide that you've had enough. And on that one day, you decide that you will demand justice even if it means death. You will demand to be heard, even when you are no longer able to speak. And, you demand to be seen, even after every eye has gone blind.

Known as the "Mother of the Modern-Day Civil Rights Movement," this was the life of the late, great Rosa Louise McCauley Parks. You all know her story. Rosa Parks became famous for her refusal to give up her seat to a white passenger on a bus. Her civil disobedience triggered the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and later helped pave the way for the civil rights movements around the world. But what you may not know is the reason Mrs. Parks refused to give up her seat. In her autobiography, *My Story*, Parks reveals her motivation:

"I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being

old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.” (Parks & Haskins, 1992).

That’s powerful stuff!

Let’s continue our journey of imagination. It is the 19th century, and you live in the era of the Industrial Revolution in Chicago, Illinois, where almost 80% of the population lives in poverty. Children are working under miserable conditions since there is no restriction on the age of workers or on the number of hours that they can work. Families (mostly immigrants) are forced to live in slums. During this time, women are also faced with the added burden of society’s demand for children--having 10 or more children, while working long hours before, and immediately after giving birth.

These were gruesome times. But, there was one woman who could bear it no longer. Jane Addams, a pioneer for social justice, was one of the first people in America who sought to improve the lives of the poor in urban slums. Raised by her father, John Addams, a successful businessman, politician, and friend of Abraham Lincoln, Jane Addams was instilled early on

with the ideals of hard work, achievement, democracy, and equality. Yet, she was torn.

She had learned that it was essential to do something important with her life, yet she grew up in a society that gave even educated women the single role of homemaker. Even though her father encouraged her to obtain a college degree, he believed its purpose was to make her a better wife and mother.

Jane Addams, however, had other plans. She got a liberal education at Rockford College, traveled to England and studied how the British were overcoming social inequalities. Upon her return, Addams founded The Hull-House, a settlement house in Chicago's worst immigrant slum area. This Center offered hot meals, child care services, and tutoring in English. Through her efforts, Addams was also able to petition the city government to pave the streets, build playgrounds, parks and public bathrooms. She shamed Chicago's business magnates to provide funding for her work.

Her local activities and longstanding commitment to improve social justice soon spread to state and national levels. And, today there are over

hundreds of thousands of such centers worldwide....what an amazing impact!

In 1932, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Our journey is not over just yet. Let's keep imagining for a just a little while longer.

Imagine you are Theodor Geisel, a Dartmouth College graduate who, in 1927 publishes political cartoons and humorous articles in a leading American humor magazine. Your cartoons gain national exposure in such popular magazines as *Life*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Liberty*. You win an Oscar for an animated short film, and you are very successful as an advertising illustrator and documentary filmmaker. However, even with all your accolades, there is a calling deep inside you that has yet to be fulfilled.

So, you dare to be different. You embark upon a new adventure, and begin writing children's books. Motivated in 1954 by a report published by *Life* magazine on illiteracy among schoolchildren that suggests that children have trouble reading because their books are boring, you write the *Cat in the Hat*. It is an instant success.

This was the life of the brilliant and playful Dr. Seuss. All of you, I am sure, grew up with the whimsical tales of Dr. Seuss. A pioneer of children's literature, Dr. Seuss, charmed his way into the consciousness of four generations of youngsters and parents. And in the process, he helped millions of kids learn to read.

He was a winner of a Pulitzer Prize and three Academy Awards, and authored and illustrated 44 children's books. His legacy of writing enchanting stories inspires millions of children to explore the joys of reading, and it continues to live on.

Now you may be asking: What do my three heroes have in common? And, more importantly, what do they have to do with me today at this day of commencement?

Each of these great, powerful figures in history possessed the initiative to take a stand and do what they believed was right. They followed their hearts. Even in the sight of adversities, they each were able to rise above. Rosa Parks rose above her fear of speaking up. Jane Addams rose above her fear of not conforming. And, Dr. Seuss rose above his fear of ostracism for

being different. Each of these pioneers was able to seize the moment, and turn each moment into years and years of inspiration for those to follow. Even to this day, we remember these heroes.

These pioneers not only helped to transform those in need, but also helped to transform those in power. So, I ask you today, Charter Class of 2006, **what will your legacy be?** Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, once said, “A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance” (Zakaria, 2006). That applies, in my view, to individuals as well.

Today is a monumental, history-making event. Today, you begin to create your own legacy. Building on the shoulders of those before you like Rosa Parks, Jane Addams, and Dr. Seuss, today, you have set the bar for those who follow. A huge responsibility has just now been entrusted to you, but ahead of you are even bigger ones. And I ask you: Are you up for the challenge?

It is important for you to understand that the profession of pharmacy is a calling, and you have CHOSEN to serve. More specifically, pharmacy practice is a labor of love, a labor of service, and labor of commitment to our patients and community. Ahead of you are many new and exciting things happening in the profession of pharmacy that will guide you in providing quality, safe and effective treatment to patients. While, yet still ahead of you, are many roadblocks and deterrents that will continue to challenge our profession.

In the opening sentence of the *Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens refers to the time during the French Revolution:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,
it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of
foolishness...
it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair,
we had everything before us, we had nothing before
us...(Dickens,1967).

I think Dickens’ words can be used to frame what’s going on in pharmacy right now. Today, we are truly living in the best of times. And today,

my friends, we indeed are living in the worst of times. Today, **good and evil**, **wisdom and folly**, and **light and darkness** stand equally matched to the challenges facing the profession of pharmacy.

Let me expand upon these thoughts for just a few moments.

Good vs. evil.

There is much good going on in pharmacy right now. As the charter class of this great university, your sitting here today is a testament of the great strides the profession has made. Everyday, pharmacists are helping patients make the best use of their medicines. In fact, I saw that yesterday at the UCSD Hospital. That is both a personal and social good. The labor of love, service and commitment pharmacists put forth in providing quality services and educating patients is reflected in the number of U.S. citizens living longer, and becoming more involved in their care. We have struck a monumental partnership with our physician and nurse colleagues.

While these goods prevail, evil lurks within the profession of pharmacy. Unfortunately, the evil acts of some cast clouds upon the good actions of

most. This was seen a couple years ago in the case of Robert R. Courtney, a Kansas City pharmacist, who admitted to inappropriately preparing 158 I.V. solutions for 34 patients. Courtney was charged with 20 federal felonies of tampering, misbranding, and diluting two cancer-fighting drugs and giving them to breast cancer patients (Young, 2001). His rationale for doing this was to help pay his taxes and fulfill a \$1 million pledge to his church.

Because of his despicable actions, government officials continue to unfairly question pharmacists and our commitment to patients and the profession. Such events are unfortunate. Evil acts like this completely violate public trust, and more importantly, put the patient at risk. It is my hope that you will always seek good over evil, and always do what is right.

Wisdom vs. folly.

In recent years, clear and succinct actions have been taken to ensure students entering into Pharm.D. programs are provided with the necessary academic and experimental tools they need to excel. Therefore, in response to the exponential growth of pharmacy schools, wise developments have been made in the areas of accreditation guidelines and standards. These

standards, coupled with robust curriculum requirements, are ensuring that students receive a quality education.

From the day you were admitted into your program, until this day, as you sit here ready to graduate, we are working to ensure that your educational experience leaves more than a mark in your memory, but also a mark in your heart. Consequently, your education has empowered you. And this educational empowerment has changed you and it will change our profession. And, most importantly, it improves the lives of our patients.

But, there's still much folly in our profession. Folly is a word we do not often use. What exactly does it mean? According to *Merriam Webster's Dictionary*, folly means: lack of good sense or normal prudence and foresight. Unfortunately, there is much of this going on in pharmacy today. With the proliferation of so-called 'natural remedies' being advertised and promoted, patients are constantly being bombarded with these supposedly effective remedies. Most of these products have no evidence-based data to support their claims, and in my analysis are largely gimmicks and frauds.

Just recently, a report written by a panel of experts convened by the Office of Dietary Supplements and the Office of Medical Applications of Research at the National Institutes of Health, question the patterns of multivitamin use and their effectiveness in a generally healthy population (Squires, 2006). But just look at the shelf space being given to these products in our pharmacies! That is folly! And, we as scientists and practitioners must be willing to speak up about this folly!

Light vs. darkness.

While Hurricane Katrina was truly one of the darkest times in our nation's history, the spirit of volunteerism by many pharmacists across the nation shines bright. Despite the devastation, pharmacists nationwide rallied together to help those in need. Even though many of the pharmacists and other health care providers were uncertain about their own home life, they voluntarily worked diligently to provide vital health care services under such painful and difficult circumstances. Their actions are commendable, and truly reflect the light in pharmacy and the giving nature of the human spirit.

Unfortunately, dark days are still ahead of us. Recently, in response to his 2007 budget and deficit reduction proposals, President Bush commented that “people talked about how the decision to reform Medicaid was immoral. Well, it’s not immoral to make sure that prescription drug pharmacists don’t overcharge the system.”

While, President Bush may have thought his comments were defending the general public, his comments have created a negative image of our profession. Not to mention, the President’s comments were **uninformed** and **outrageous**.

The dark truth is that Part D payments from Medicare are slow, which leaves many pharmacists with backlogs of due payments stretching into thousands of dollars. Pharmacists are spending countless un-reimbursed hours trying to verify eligibility. Since the start of Medicare Part D, many pharmacies are losing money, due in large part to lower reimbursement rates for prescriptions (*Drug Topics*, 2006). Unfortunately, the inconceivable comments from our nation’s leader make it very clear that the profession of pharmacy is not well understood. We truly have a long way to go!

We have a long way to go, but our challenges are not insurmountable. With every good, there is evil. With all wisdom there exists folly. And, in light, darkness must also fall. So, with these challenges, we must learn to balance the arrows in our quiver. And, we must strive to always do better.

One person who has inspired me throughout my career is the late Senator Paul Simon from my home state of Illinois. Senator Paul Simon was for many years, an influential figure in American politics. He believed that the “government is not the enemy...(it) is simply a tool that can be used wisely or unwisely” (*CNN.com*, 2003).

One of his most powerful books, titled *We Can Do Better*, is a series of letters to President Clinton that is equal parts public policy and a sermon on leadership. In his book, Simon examines the major problems facing the nation, and provides thoughtful, often poignant, and certainly challenging solutions. Simply put, he calls on the government to do better.

And, just like Senator Simon it is my call to you today, that as the newest members of our profession, we can do better! And in doing better, leaving your legacy, if you will:

-**let us be honest**— the word honest comes from the Latin word which means honorable. Therefore, it is honorable that “to thine ownself be true, and it must follow, as the night the day” (Shakespeare, 2006). **Leave your legacy!**

-**let us be determined**— life is an obstacle course, and the road to success is never without some degree of defeat, discouragement, or dismay. But, what is important is that you finish the race, and always have a plan for improving your ‘game.’ **Leave your legacy!**

- **let us be optimistic**—optimists and cynics are both idealists. The only difference is that while one hopes, the other despairs. Be hopeful, and in all things, learn to execute the plan against all odds. **Leave your legacy!**

In closing, I'd like to congratulate each of you again on your outstanding accomplishment. You've been afforded a terrific education, from a great institution. Now, it is your time to serve as role models for those to follow. And, like the great pioneers I mentioned today, there is a Rosa Parks, a Jane Addams, and a Dr. Seuss in each one of you. Leave your legacy!

I think it is only befitting that I leave you with words of wisdom and light from my favorite Dr. Seuss book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go* (Seuss, 1990):

Congratulations!

Today is your day.

You're off to Great Places!

You're off and away!

You have brains in your head.

You have feet in your shoes

You can steer yourself

any direction you choose.

You're on your own. And you know what you know.

And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go.

You'll look up and down streets. Look 'em over with care.
About some you will say, "I don't choose to go there."
With your head full of brains and your shoes full of feet,
you're too smart to go down any not-so-good street.

And you may not find any
you'll want to go down.
In that case, of course,
you'll head straight out of town.

It's opener there
in the wide open air.

Out there things can happen
and frequently do
to people as brainy
and footsy as you.

And when things start to happen,

don't worry. Don't stew.

Just go right along.

You'll start happening too.

OH! THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

I wish you Godspeed and every success! FELL THE LOVE!

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and to join you in this ceremony today. And again...**leave your legacy!**

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