**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**DMITRI TITO**

To everyone here... family and friends, fellow graduates and classmates, members of the faculty... the board of governors, staff, administrators, and distinguished guests, it is an honor to stand at this podium, before all of you, to express some thoughts as the president of class of 2020 here at West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. I know that as I speak for my fellow graduates, I am sure they all agree that this event represents something beyond completion. These commencement exercises signal a sense of pride and success... I have to say, our success is thanks to a synergistic, thoughtful, focused collaboration with all of you. From the encouragement we received from family and friends to the guidance shared by faculty, to the commiseration and empathy so freely exchanged between all of us... no matter the class or assignment, we are very clear that we could never have achieved all that we have done so far, without your love and guidance. For that, we want to express our gratitude and appreciation. Thank you!

To the Class of 2020.... **CONGRATULATIONS!!! We made it!** The day that we dreamed of is finally here... (**If you want to make a little joke, you can a little confused and say**) **NOW** **what do we do**??? (**And wait for the laugh**) All jokes aside, throughout the years here at WVSOM, we, as a class, bonded and grew together... we shared our emotions, exchanged frantic calls and triumphant texts... we cheered for our shared and individual victories and supported one another as we forged further onward... into the “great unknown”... the world of Osteopathic medicine. We prepared and planned and checked on each other as exams were approaching.... and they **DID** approach!!

Four years ago, as we all came together from various backgrounds, cultures, family dynamics, majors such as science, engineering, literature, arts, and music, we realized we had one common thread that united us. We all possessed the same goal... to become physicians. Some classmates were medically more knowledgeable and advanced than others. For others, it was their first time to discover the intricacies of medicine. Some of us were enthusiastic, others were anxious, a small group were relaxed about the medical school journey they were about to take, but **ALL** of us were excited to rise to the challenges we were to face. A lot of us had to make sacrifices...for some it was moving on from existing careers or family, leaving behind worlds and lives that we loved so that we would be able to dedicate our time to studies and to care for patients. We all were, and **ARE** willing to pay the price for those sacrifices to become physicians, because in our hearts, we knew... and **KNOW**... the importance of dedicating our careers to advancing the well-being of others. Today, as we commemorate the completion of our formal studies, it is gratifying that we are still united as we all share the same feelings... joy, relief, accomplishment…I’m proud to be a part of the energy and Adrenalin that fills this venue (**if you want to make a joke you can say**) ... either that or it’s the **flu**... (**Wait for the laugh)**.

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In July of 2016, we were terrified... worried for the performance expected of us as we started medical school. I must say, though, that some students were already prepared... they were bright eyed and eager and had their first aid books opened... to the **CORRECT PAGE** from day one... **AND** they had the reading halfway completed. **SOME** of us... it **could have been ME..**. weren’t **quite** as on top of things... I remember asking my neighbor “COMLEX level 1 is next year right?” (**Wait for the laugh**)

I remember that first year of medical school, how eagerly we all arrived early to class to get the best seats. Little did we know that others camped out the night before so **THEY** could get those first seats.... we also noticed that as the semesters passed and experience grew, the vantage points and best seats in the house also shifted... there probably was a direct correlation and algorithm that determined how far back one sits in class proportionate to the quantity of questions per test!! Through it all, were collectively impressed by each other’s backgrounds, stories, and adventures. We came from all over the country and we knew that we wanted to learn from everyone... from the young twenty-one year old to the more life experienced forty year old. It is impressive to see how much diversity could be found in a single medical school class in the coolest small town in America. A beautiful community adopted us and enriched our lives and experience.

I remember our first test was a foundation of osteopathic medicine exam. After that first foundation exam, we got the feeling that medical school was not bad after all... **IF** every exam could be like that foundation exam. That was before we had the first anatomy practical. We were so anxious to get our first official medical school grades. Until then, we thought med school was manageable after all... (**I don’t understand this next part**) ***then MSK fire hose before we got destroyed by the blood and lymph module after winter break.*** We were terrified, it was like, “This is it. We’re done...” Some of us, including myself, started to google “medical school alternatives” after that exam. (**Wait for the laugh**) but we hung in and stayed the course... literally.... At some point, our education could be defined with one term: suboccipital inhibition, the first osteopathic technique we learned.

Our group shared everything from class lectures to board materials. We even shared the best ways to double speed a lecture. From the beginning we were a team. Our dream became a collective goal... to be here today... **ALL** of us together. Some of us could have given up but we didn’t. We persevered. The joy that came from realizing the dream motivated us as individuals and as integral parts of a larger purpose. If we are sitting here today, it means that we have **SURVIVED** and **PREVAILED**... We’ve reviewed thousands of powerpoint slides, countless textbook materials, completed dozens of class exams and quizzes, powered through **TWO** OSCEs, **EIGHT** COMATs, **THREE plus** licensing exams, and in our last semester of medical school, “IPE”... On top of that many of us even found time to be involved in actual lives outside of class!!

We have been active on social media as well, building a supportive, informative network. We shared lecture materials, board exam questions, study materials and more, all with the intention to encourage success. We reminded each other of deadlines for upcoming assignments. We shared struggles and hardships.... And we learned patience... we waited and waited... for Paige, Sky, or Taylor to finish charts so we might finally be able to do the directed study.... thanks to these three!!! Their efforts were worth the wait!!

We have diagnosed our friends and family members with every possible illness... (**If you want to make a joke, you can say**)... Fortunately, most were able to make it here today... (**and wait for the laugh**)... ***And then, seriously, another email from the administration. What else have we done***? **(?**[?? This doesn’t make sense](http://www.apple.com)).

I remember our Site selection drama. Then came the third year clinical rotations, a new adventure. Applying what we learned in a clinical setting while asking pertinent questions and performing physical exams, learning how to work with the rest of the medical team, began to bring our future profession to life.  And, of course... Another OSCE, another board exam…

***Then 4th year, audition rotations lonely marked by pimping after pimping. We, trying to impress everyone we meet on auditions..***(**? I don’t understand this part).**

 And through all of this.... the **questions**... Have you noticed when one of your undergraduate friends wanted to know **exactly** what you were doing in medical school that kept you so busy? (**Wait for the laugh**) But when we were together, we were **TOGETHER**... We didn’t **JUST** study as a group. We, were also known to provide constructive and valuable feedback to the administration in order to enhance the curriculum. We tutored lower classmates as well. We also spent “down time” together. There were birthday parties at the Asylum... sometimes that name was **TOO** appropriate... (**Wait for the laugh**), late weekends at the Irish pubs, Thursday sweet shops... We even had a med school prom at the Greenbrier resort. (**Do you want to add**)... lab coats optional... (**and wait for the laugh**).

I’ve heard the expression, “I am part of all that I have met.” To have met the people ... to have formed the bonds... to have the privilege of receiving the education we honor today.... and to have the opportunity to contribute to others, has been the gift of a lifetime. Despite our different backgrounds, we worked together make a difference. We’re proud to have helped organize the volunteer effort for the 2016 Greenbrier flood relief. We coordinated group activities and other volunteer projects to support the community. We organized financial responses to crises, and we even offered to share our homes when needed.

Today, we’re not just getting our diplomas... we are leaving as a **unit**... friends, best friends, wives, husbands, fiancés. We’ve grown together and became family. We travelled together, studied together... we are a part of all that we’ve met here at WVSOM.

To family and friends that have been by our sides from day one, thank you for always being there. To advisors, mentors, faculty, staff, preceptors... Thank you again…

Thanks to the admissions team who saw in us, even before our medical school journey, the qualities needed to get to this point and beyond.

At this time, fellow graduates, I invite you to turn to your neighbor and give a big congratulatory hug. You may have forgotten their name but that’s ok... you can still give a hug. As we move on, let’s not forget about social medicine. We’re not just physicians, we’re steopathic physicians. That means we understand the patient beyond the illness. We **cannot** forget about those marginalized... those without access to adequate healthcare, patients with different socioeconomic status, those without transportation or the means to receive adequate care. We advocate for **ALL**.

Learn to Invest in the mind, body and spirit, just like we learned from our first OPP lecture.

As we go our separate ways, remember we are all unique. Many communities would be fortunate to have you as one of their physicians. Please share your compassion with others, share your skills and talent. Continue to do what you do best: and that is **CARING**.

It has been an honor to be your class president for the past three years. You will always be part of me. ... just please answer my phone calls... or at least text... (**wait for the laugh**). I look forward to seeing all of you for our first class reunion.

God bless WVSOM. God bless the class of 2020. Thank you all!!