

**UMass Medical School Chancellor Michael F. Collins
Commencement Address
May 31, 2015**

It is a special privilege each commencement day to have the opportunity to offer a few final thoughts to our graduates and the community that has gathered to support them, as we recognize their most important accomplishments.

Our faculty and students continue to demonstrate their keen intellect, compassion and skills at innovation 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?

During this past year, throughout the Commonwealth and beyond, our university has been making the case that we are “here for a reason!”

In our case, that is so true.

At MassBiologics, we have expanded our presence in the Commonwealth and have embarked on impressive plans to make our next 100 million doses of life-changing biologics. At Commonwealth Medicine, we continue to advocate for those most in need in our society as we provide the intellectual capital to assist those who care for the neediest amongst us.

We have embarked on aggressive plans to collaborate throughout the five campuses of the university and with our health system partner. We recognize the importance of our efforts to continue to spark discovery and create innovation throughout the life sciences ecosystem that exists in our Commonwealth.

Our founders could only have imagined what we have become. Less than half a century ago, on this very spot, the land was tilled, cattle grazed and visionaries in medicine stood aside the lake and planned to create a campus that would change the future of medicine.

Today, here assembled are those who are fulfilling that vision. Clearly, we are here for a reason!

We are known throughout the land for our commitment to primary care.

The care provided in our health system is at the forefront of medicine. Those who are our patients are most grateful that our clinicians care, discover and teach.

The science conducted throughout our laboratories is at the leading edge of innovation. We know because members of our faculty, this year, have received the Breakthrough Prize, been welcomed as a Howard Hughes Investigator, have been acclaimed by foreign countries and

continue to receive recognition from the NIH and industry innovators and investors, all of whom recognize the import and impact of the science on this campus.

That said, there is no greater accomplishment than that which exists in the lives of our graduates this day. We welcomed you to our campus as you were and we have seen you transformed to become who you are now and, more importantly, what you will do in the future. You shall become those who will fulfill the vision our founders had for graduates and do so in places they did not contemplate.

In each and every encounter throughout your careers, you shall represent all that is great about this very special place. Through your actions, you shall make it greater!

In recent encounters with caregivers and patients, I have heard simple, yet poignant, stories that touched the lives of those dear to them.

In one instance, it was a story about the young granddaughter who took the time to help her grandfather button his sweater; his fingers just could not accomplish this task. Together, they embraced as the reality of life's limitations embraced them.

In another, a young child grabbed some little flowers from the ground and offered them to an officer who was helping her and her mom find their way after visiting a family member.

In the last, a son told his dad it was OK they could not go out that day to build a snowman. His dad had ALS and the little boy comforted his father, as they held hands and were consumed by the blizzard of disease that would soon end their time together.

These were simple acts of kindness; moments that have cast images that will last forever.

As you walk from this campus today, you have accomplished so much. You are graduates in professions that are respected and needed to change our world. It is clear to all that you are here for a reason.

Please continue to be guided by the idealism that you brought with you to campus. Rebuff indifference wherever you see it and whenever you encounter it. Take your enormous intellect and gifts and use them to change the course of the history of disease. As you do so, please remember that your simple acts of kindness may be the images that will last forever.

Put your arms around the mentee in a lab; encourage them that the next experiment may yield the results they need to complete their findings.

Sit on the side of the bed; dismiss the entourage that accompanies you and take a moment to hold the hand of your patients as you comfort them in their moments of greatest need.

Reach out to those less fortunate; those in your communities and those far beyond. They are in need of your intellect and compassion. So few of us are given the privilege that soon will be accorded to you; use your many talents to care for and about others throughout the rest of your lives.

As you begin your careers, and as you continue in them, we hope that you will be inspired by those we pay tribute to today. They are here for a reason!

Like Monica Coenraads, will you be able to challenge adversity and make a profound commitment to the importance of science as you resolve to cure disease?

Like our colleagues who put others before themselves to care for those with Ebola, will selfless determination characterize important moments of your career?

Like Victor Dzau, will a commitment to academic medicine, the health of populations and intellectual colloquy, compel you to be a medicine thought leader for our nation?

As you embark upon your bright futures, we shall watch with heightened anticipation for your many accomplishments. Please remain mindful that our communities, our Commonwealth, our nation and our world need you.

We need your intellect and innovation;

We need your care and compassion;

We need your humility, humanity and kindness.

And, all the while, know that we will take great pride in recognizing you as one of our own.

You are here for a reason!

Congratulations!