

Adele Commencement Speech 2016

Greetings Everyone,

I am so very thrilled to share this wonderful evening with you. I deliver my brief message tonight on behalf of the entire MUIH community, including our very proud President, Frank Vitale. President Vitale deeply regrets that, despite his best intentions, it is impossible for him to participate in this evening's Commencement. He extends his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to all graduates, their loved ones, and the greater MUIH community. And we, in turn, wish him the very best.

I'm so happy to see those of you who are present tonight. And I'm aware that many more graduates are present in spirit because they are scattered across the nation and across the globe. I ask that we all hold these dear colleagues and friends in our hearts now and always.

Tonight, we will be honoring the largest graduating class in the history of the University – 288 healers will leave our walls to change the world!

Before I go any further, I want to offer our sincere and heartfelt acknowledgements to everyone who has contributed to our individual and collective accomplishments.

Behind the scenes, creating stability and possibility for MUIH are the Board of Trustees, the Officers, and the academic directors. Would these University leaders please stand and be acknowledged?

At the very heart of every university are the amazing people who inspire, impart wisdom, listen, mentor and create a learning environment where every student can thrive. Would the faculty and staff of MUIH please stand and be acknowledged?

We are well aware that behind every one of our graduates there must be a complex and loving support system. People who had to encourage, create safe space, stand in for and sometimes make excuses for the graduates when school work needed to be prioritized. Would the families and friends of the graduates please stand and be acknowledged?

Every commencement, I become acutely aware of why we are all here at MUIH – why the University exists. It's for our students and graduates. Our hearts are bursting with pride for you right now. Will you all please stand and allow us to acknowledge you for the first time, but not the last, this evening?

I've been around healthcare for a long time as a nurse and even served as the Secretary for Health and Mental Hygiene for the state of Maryland for several years. I've seen the rise and fall of myriad systems, policies, and approaches. And I am truly convinced that integrative health is a vital part of the answer for today and for future generations. So what exactly does this look like? While each healer has to find their own way, here's how I've put it together after being influenced by many of you at MUIH:

We listen to, connect with, accept, and honor every patient and client exactly as they are and we empower them to play an active role in the healing process.

We believe in and facilitate each person's innate powers for self-healing and regeneration.

We offer care that respects and nurtures all aspects of an individual's life – body, mind, and spirit.

We acknowledge that everyone comes to us with a narrative, a context, and a community that must be considered in the healing journey.

We are willing to learn from nature and the cycle of the seasons and to teach this to our patients and clients.

And we are open to using multiple healing disciplines and to working collaboratively with a wide variety of healthcare colleagues.

How did I do?

As you put this together for yourself and go on to the next steps of your professional and personal journeys, I have just three quick lessons to offer – lessons that I've learned the hard way but have come to live by.

Lesson 1 – There is no free lunch (especially if it's organic and locally grown)

Every one of us pays our dues to build our careers. In choosing integrative health, you've already chosen a path less traveled. You may not always be heard or respected. You may not get a seat at the healthcare tables you want. Your clients may not follow your guidance. Well, OK. There's nothing wrong with a little struggle. You'll just need to be more creative, to work harder, to reach higher. You'll need to listen without judgement and partner authentically. Don't assume that a closed door will forever be closed. Keep at it.

One of my favorite stories is from Sojourner Truth – a fierce feminist and anti-slave activist. She was giving a speech one day and was heckled by a gentleman in the audience who said, "Old slave woman, I don't care about your antislavery talk. It's getting to be like an old flea bite." To which she replied, "That's alright, the Lord willing, I'm going to keep you scratching!"

So, keep them scratching! The fact that you made it to this point shows me that you're up for the challenges that might lie ahead.

Lesson 2 – There are no bystanders

Don't ever wait around for someone else to dictate your role, your possibilities, your career, your life. Giving control to others creates a victim mentality which serves no one. To me, some of the saddest words are, "Why didn't somebody do something?" What I'd like you to ask is, "What can I do?" Don't be afraid to take risks and don't worry about criticism. The very act of choosing this field makes you change agent, a catalyst for better things to come, a leader. Wear these roles as badges of honor and pave the way for your field and for future generations of healers.

Lesson 3 – There is no voice as important to your success as your own

Einstein said that there are few who see with their own eyes and feel with their own hearts. I believe that only those who can find the genuine within themselves can hear it within others. When other voices and opinions filter through, remember why you chose this path. Your passion and commitment to this work have gotten you this far and will continue to fuel you. Reach out to each other and to MUIH. Most importantly, remember to take time to care for yourself, to reflect, to breathe, and to find the peace and calm that lives within. Your beautiful voice will then become apparent once again.

Graduates, the world is waiting for you. And we can't wait to see what you do!

Congratulations!