

Commencement 2016

Bonnie Pace

The Journey to Become the Healer – Where else but MUIH?

Good evening family and friends, faculty and staff, and most importantly, graduates!

From Professional Development to Personal Growth

On this graduation day, I think back to sitting in new student orientation at that first weekend of classes. At 52 years old, and more than 30 years since my last college class, my main reason for pursuing my degree was to further my career. The first time I heard the words “be the healer”, I can say I was a little skeptical. There may have even been eye rolling! Now, after two years of coursework and clinic, interactions with talented professors and caring classmates, I can say with conviction that I believe in the meaning behind “be the healer”.

It goes beyond collecting knowledge and grinding through classes. It’s about the “integrative” part of Maryland University of Integrative Health. It means learning to treat the whole person, to truly listen and help people down the path to better health. Theodore Roosevelt once said “people don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care”. My experience at MUIH progressed from wanting to know as much as I could, to learning to use that knowledge with care and compassion.

Healing comes in many forms. The students I have met at MUIH have inspired me. I’ve met Health and Wellness coaching students with incredible patience and talent. There are acupuncture students who know how to not only provide care to people... but **also** to cats and dogs! Yoga therapy students with a calm, meditative presence and students who know more about herbs than I could ever hope to. Their excitement and dedication not only inspired me but encouraged me to push harder. Even though I still have much to learn, I now share my knowledge secure in the feeling that I am much more of a healer than I was two years ago.... Without eye rolling.

The Power of Like-mindedness

As I sat in that first class, Foundations of Health and Wellness, I met students in my Nutrition program but also in a variety of MUIH programs. I was struck by the fact that others had similar desires, ideas, and philosophies. This shared vision of what health care should and could be was a thrilling revelation. I really believe we are a little “different” here. The power of like mindedness at MUIH is palpable. You can feel it almost as soon as you walk through the doors. We take this healing thing pretty seriously. We walk the walk. It doesn’t matter what kind of day you have had, when you walk through the doors of MUIH, and you see your friends, and begin to talk and continue learning things that you are passionate about, all else falls away.

My own passion was fueled by my professors, who may not really understand the true impact they have on their students. Some had a gentle, caring way of helping you understand something you were terrified you wouldn't be able to grasp (like organic chemistry). Others lead you through long, intense topics with colored markers and charts. Some kept you captivated with stories from their own clinical experiences, and pushed us to be creative and out of the box thinkers. All were mentors in some way. I will be forever grateful to those who guided me through clinic, and those who encouraged me to be more than who I was when I walked through the doors the first time, and I thank you.

On behalf of my fellow graduates there are others we would like to thank... as very few of us could have accomplished this on our own. Friends, Family coworkers and neighbors who helped with the household chores, took care of the kids on nights we had homework, allowed us to take a pass on social engagements. Thanks for understanding that normal weekends would not exist for the period of time it took us to get this degree. We could not have done it without you.

Impact of Becoming the Healer

I feel quite different now than I did when I began. We have been given a wonderful opportunity, a gift. As we go out into our communities, we will be representing our school, our professors, and the experiences we gained here at MUIH.

Becoming the healer also means giving back. I am confident that my education will lead to a meaningful career. My sense has always been that when you are enthusiastic and honest about what you do, the rest will fall into place. As we move on to the next phase of our journey, there is a quote by Ben Sweetland, a motivational writer that I feel is appropriate. "We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own."

As a member of this local HoCo community I feel a strong responsibility to hold that torch high, to enhance the health and the lives of those in my community. Today's graduates will ignite that flame for themselves, as well as their clients and patients around the country and around the world.

Where else but MUIH?

Indulge me for one more moment as share a poem I wrote. Where else but MUIH? Where else would your experiences include:

Learning (and relearning) organic chemistry

While learning to bake foods that are gluten free

Four hour written exams that leave your hands cramped and your brain fried

And then herb garden walks and classes outside

Papers on athletes use of supplements and pills

Lectures on nourishment for cancers and other ills

Writing the entire metabolic pathway (from a fed state)

To the healing powers of laughter and mental escape

Hours of case studies challenging your knowledge and skill

And designing deep breathing mindful meditations to make your heart still

On line lectures, with instructors far away

Or sitting in class in Laurel eight hours a day

At the Meeting Point where you'd hear nutrition students say

Don't they know I'm paleo, or gluten free, vegan for today?

Where one classroom has a lecture on research and stats,

While lectures on either side include drums and yoga mats.

Students from various backgrounds jumping into the fray

Learning to be the healer, the MUIH way.

Where else but MUIH?

I am proud to call myself a graduate, a healer, from this University.

Thank you and congratulations to all of the graduates!