

University of Delaware 169th Commencement

Saturday, May 26, 2018, Delaware Stadium

Good morning! What a wonderful day to graduate!

As your president, it is a great privilege and honor to welcome you all to UD's 169th commencement ceremony. We are joined this morning by so many special people:

Senator Tom Carper, a proud alum.

We have our distinguished faculty, our loyal staff and our dedicated Trustees.

We have our honorary degree recipients, who will be recognized today with the highest academic award bestowed by the University.

We have our amazing alumni, who are tireless ambassadors to the world.

We have all the loving families and friends of our graduates.

And, of course, we have ***you*** ... the Class of 2018, the best class ever to graduate from the University of Delaware!

Let me be the first to congratulate you on reaching this milestone in your lives. Well done!

This is a great university — one of the nation's best.

But that's not because of our buildings or our history or even our UDairy ice cream ... all of which ***are*** pretty awesome.

The University of Delaware is great because ***you*** make it so.

Today, you're earning **301** Associate's degrees, **4,693** Bachelor's degrees, **1,025** Master's degrees and **385** doctoral degrees.

We have graduates from 43 states and 78 countries.

All of you brought your curiosity, your passion and your energy to UD. And you accomplished so much during your time on this campus. We're proud of everything you've achieved — in the classroom and the lab ... on the athletic field ... and around the world.

In your class, there are more awards, scholarships and other successes than we can possibly enumerate here today.

Some of you created your own businesses to bring innovative products and services to the world. You started nonprofit organizations to help families, veterans, the homeless and more.

We're proud of the way you expressed different opinions and translated your passions into ideas to build a better world. You helped the University of Delaware continue to be a place where freedom of speech is still the norm, not the exception.

We're also proud of how you served others ... devoting your winter and spring breaks in communities from Michigan to Florida ... from Bangladesh to Guatemala ... and throughout the academic year right here in Delaware. You built homes, cooked meals, cared for people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and — through UDance — you raised **more than \$2 million** to help eradicate childhood cancer!

A Commencement ceremony is a celebration of everything you've accomplished. But more importantly, it's an opportunity to consider what lies ahead.

As you leave the beautiful UD campus, this is your opportunity to change the world and make it look like ... the University of Delaware.

That's what our alumni are doing and what many of your fellow graduates have already done.

Students like **Natalie Criscenzo**, your Student Government president who advocated on your behalf and continues to study public policy as an instrument of change to make the world a better place.

And our Taylor Award recipient, **Zachary Sexton**, who researched circulatory systems to improve strategies for organ replacement, and plans to combine bioengineering with public health to address chronic disease.

And like our Warner Award recipient, **Laura Donohue**, whose animal-science studies took her nearly 20,000 miles around the world and who now wants to use her knowledge and experience to improve food security worldwide.

Opening today's ceremony, we heard from **Ethan Udovich**, a music student and member of the UD Chorale who traveled to 10 countries during his time at UD and who plans to become a professional opera singer and perform in the great opera houses of the world.

Or like star athlete and 3.99-GPA Biomedical Engineering student **Amanda Studnicki**, who co-captained the women's tennis team and was named to the 2018 Academic All-District Team.

Like these exemplary students, ***all of you*** — the Class of 2018 — will bring your unwavering ideals, your versatile skills and your inexhaustible energy to whatever you choose to pursue beginning today.

I want you to ***keep striving*** for inclusive excellence ... keep reaching out to people of different cultures, different perspectives, different physical and mental abilities. Talk to each other — and more importantly, listen to each other.

Never forget ... that you are citizens of the world.

More than a third of you studied abroad during your time at UD. You traveled to every continent and immersed yourselves in diverse cultures. You heard a plurality of languages, danced to beautiful music and ate exotic foods that you won't find even at the Rodney dining hall.

And many of you brought the world to UD, creating a global family of Blue Hens here in Newark.

You'll need to work together as a community — one that brings together a wide range of expertise and perspective. Only through cooperation and collaboration will you be able to address the complex challenges you'll face in your careers and in society.

The world desperately needs ***teams*** of engineers and artists ... teachers and scientists ... people who understand business and history and languages and medicine and so much more.

Working together, ***we can*** go far!

This is your opportunity to be innovators and entrepreneurs. Every day, ask yourself: How can I use my talents to turn obstacles into opportunities? How can I look for answers instead of excuses? How can I use my creativity to imagine the possibilities instead of the limitations?

Finally, never stop investing in the future — because investing in people and new opportunities is the only way we can build a new reality.

We are all here today because someone invested in us. Our families and friends believed that we could achieve our dreams and gave us the support and resources to

do so. This university invested in you — in your potential and your vision for a better world.

And you invested so much of yourselves — your early mornings and your late nights ... your energy, both intellectual and physical ... your sweat and sometimes even your tears. You invested all of this because you knew tomorrow would come and you wanted to be ready.

Keep investing ...

... in your communities, through service and volunteer work ...

... in society, as an engaged and informed citizen ...

... in yourselves, through constant learning and personal growth.

And invest in this University — **your** University of Delaware — so that others may experience the joy and the excitement and the boundless optimism that you're feeling right now.

The world **can** be a better place.

You can make it better.

You can make the world more like the University of Delaware.

I am extremely optimistic about the future knowing that our Class of 2018 will be out there changing the world!

Congratulations, you are Blue Hens forever!

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