A thoughtful send-off for 166 DMS graduates

There are many times during graduate school when students may feel a little uncertain, but graduation day is not usually one of them. And yet uncertainty was the theme that Michael Miller, the Ph.D. student speaker, chose for his 2011 Class Day speech. In all, DMS bade farewell to 166 students from the M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., and M.S. programs this past June.

Ideas: “I urge each of you to find your own balance,” said Miller, “between confidence, gained from your knowledge and experience, and uncertainty, to allow new ideas and observations to inform your approach.” Miller’s research mentor, Supachai Supattapone, M.D., Ph.D., often advised him, he said, to become “comfortable with uncertainty.” (See page 3 for a recent finding they made.)

“We might think of science,” Miller went on, “as a system of strict and established facts: the double helical structure of DNA, a drug’s effect on a disease, or the movements of planets in the solar system.” But the foundation of science “is not made of concrete, but of sand that can shift beneath our feet. Indeed, this endeavor is not a linear path.”

Nonlinear: The M.P.H. student speaker, Don Caruso, M.D., who has been a family doctor for over 25 years, shared his own nonlinear career path. Three years ago, he decided to “go back to school” at the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice (TDI)—while continuing to practice and oversee primary care at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Clinic in Keene, N.H. “The challenges over the last three years at TDI have been tremendous,” he said, but added that “challenges are what make us grow, [and] growth is essential for personal satisfaction.”

In addition to addressing the personal aspects of scientific and medical careers, all of the speakers encouraged the graduates to tackle problems bigger than themselves. That message was also echoed during the Dartmouth College commencement ceremony the next day.

Howard Hiatt, M.D., a recipient of one of the honorary degrees, served as a prime example for the graduates of someone who has taken on broad public health issues while building a career. He is a founder of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and of the Division of Social Medicine and Health at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. He has “been hailed for making public health the watchdog and conscience of medicine,” said Dartmouth President Jim Yong Kim, M.D., Ph.D., in awarding Hiatt an honorary doctorate of science.

Kim also presented an honorary degree to Michael Gazzaniga, Ph.D., a 1961 graduate of Dartmouth College. Later, while on the faculty at Dartmouth, Gazzaniga established the Dartmouth Center for Cognitive Neuroscience “is not made of concrete, but of sand that can shift beneath our feet. Indeed, this endeavor is not a linear path.”

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TABLE TALK: M.D.-M.B.A. student Anthony Paravati was quoted recently in Healthcare Finance News as saying that he “looked for a school with an integrated M.D.-M.B.A. program” so he’d understand management matters. “I didn’t want to . . . not have a seat at the table,” he said.

Class of 2011 Awards and Prizes

Dean’s Medal Laura Amar-Dolan
Good Physician Award Thomas Frandsen
John W. Strohbehn Medal for Excellence in Biomedical Research Fabrizio Galimberti
Frederic P. Lord Award in Anatomy Joo Cho
Department of Anesthesiology Award George Allen
Saul Blatman Award for Excellence in Maternal and Child Health Abigail Hoke
Department of Medicine Paul Gerber Award Chetan Huded
American Academy of Neurology Prize Margaret McDermott
Barry D. Smith, M.D., Award for Excellence in Obstetrics and Gynecology Erin Washburn
Dr. Freddie Fu Orthopaedic Surgery Award M. Allison Arensman
New Hampshire Pediatric Society Award Alissa Curda
Department of Psychiatry Award Matthew Ippolito
Harte C. Crow Award in Radiology Joo Cho
Arthur Naitove Surgical Scholar Award Claudia Berrondo
Dartmouth-Mosenthal Surgical Society M. Allison Arensman, Claudia Berrondo, Brian Doyle, Thomas Kovalik, Jennifer Tonneson, Hanghang Wang
Julian and Melba Jarrett Memorial Prize Kimberly Cartmill
C. Everett Koop, M.D., Courage Award Nicolas Ellis
Ford von Reyn Global Health Research Fellow Matthew Ippolito
John and Sophia Zaslow Prize Elizabeth Killien
Douglas P. Zipes, M.D., Research Prize in Medicine Arye Elfenbein
Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award Jill Rosno
John F. Radebaugh Community Service Award Matthew Ippolito
Rural Health Scholar Awards Abigail Hoke, Matthew Ippolito, Margaret McDermott
Glasgow-Rubin Citation for Academic Achievement Laura Amar-Dolan, Kimberly Cartmill, Alissa Curda, Elizabeth Killien, Abiodun Kukoyi
Payson-Hampers M.D.-M.B.A. Scholars Award George Allen, M. Allison Arensman
Rolf C. Syvertsen Fellow and Scholars Amy Chan, Laura Amar-Dolan, Kimberly Cartmill, Alissa Curda, Abiodun Kukoyi
Merck Manual Awards Thomas Frandsen, Jill Rosno, Erin Sullivan
It was under gloomy skies that the graduates marched into DMS’s Class Day ceremonies this year, but inside the tent all was festive and colorful, as exemplified by the graduates’ velvet-lined hoods and the crimson robe worn by DMS Dean Wiley Souba as he presided over his first Class Day. The event featured speeches, including by M.D. grad Erin Sullivan, and a recitation of the Hippocratic Oath. Then it was time for photo ops with friends, family, and favorite faculty members, including for M.D. grad Abiodun Kukoyi (right) and Ph.D. grad Fabrizio Galimberti (left) and his research advisor, Ethan Dmitrovsky.

Neuroscience and has since “taken [his] place in history as the father of cognitive neuroscience,” said Kim.

Lofty: No matter what path the graduates had chosen—science, medicine, or policy—they all received the same lofty charges on Class Day. For example, keynote speaker Darrell Kirch, M.D., president of the Association of American Medical Colleges, went further than just inspiring the graduates to tackle big issues. He told them that helping to fix the U.S. health-care system “is a matter of your ethical obligations, not your politics.... I hope you’re ready to join us in a very worthy effort.”

Erin Sullivan, the M.D. student speaker, built on this theme by reminding graduates of a famous quote by former Dartmouth President John Sloan Dickey: “The world’s troubles are your troubles, and there is nothing wrong with the world that better human beings cannot fix.”

“That is the Dartmouth legacy,” she added, “and it is our turn to bring his words to life.”

Faculty awards: As the graduates headed out into the world to do just that, there was one thing they appeared certain of, and that’s the teachers who had had the greatest impact on them. They presented the Basic Science Teaching Award to Dr. Lee Witters, an endocrinologist; the Clinical Science Teaching Award to Dr. John Dick, a hospitalist; and the Thomas P. Almy Housestaff Teaching Award to Dr. Abhishek Chatterjee, a resident in general surgery.

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