

**May 17, 2006**  
**Final**

Good morning

It is a great pleasure and an honor to be here today. Thank you Dr. Winkenwerder, Surgeons General, Federal Nursing Chiefs, Mr. Alvarez, Dr. Brawley, Dr. Mohr, honored guests, distinguished faculty, administrators, and certainly, USU graduates and your families.

Commencement is a joyous and a solemn occasion as we celebrate the great accomplishments of our students and remind ourselves of the missions on which they are about to embark.

You, our graduates today have chosen the path of public service and are dedicating your life's work to the greater good. It is both an awesome and a noble choice; one which demands humility and sacrifice, but brings untold rewards.

I commend you for your choices and I applaud the work and commitment that have brought you to this day.

The future of this university stands squarely on your shoulders and on the accomplishments of those who have come before you.

(PAUSE)

I arrived at USU with a vision of this university as the nation's health sciences academy. My commitment to this vision has been deepened by working with the outstanding students, faculty and staff of USU.

Congress has concurred with the President's recommendation to create the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda. As a recent article in the Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons said, .."auspicious events are conspiring to bring us all together for the common good."

We are working closely with Dr. Winkenwerder and the four Surgeons General to create USU's future as the academic health center serving the military healthcare system and the nation.

It is an exciting and promising future for this university and for the nation.

**(Brief pause)**

This is my first commencement as the president of your university and it is a momentous occasion for me as well as for you.

I would like to express appreciation to everyone who has made this moment in your careers possible.

I want to thank your deans and your faculty, who have guided you for the last several years and prepared you for your challenging and rewarding future. I know they strive to impart not only knowledge but also the values that are the foundation of our professions.

Above all, we owe a debt to your parents, spouses, children and other members of your families who supported you during a period of life that has had many good moments, but has also brought great demands.

And so I ask all graduates to stand and join me in applauding these people who deserve our gratitude, and who share with us the joy of this day.

**(APPLAUSE)**

**(Pause)**

As you are about to leave for other pursuits we come together, not only to celebrate your achievements, but also to remind us all of the values that sustain us.

All serious studies call for serious commitment. As we all know, USU is more demanding than other academic health centers.

USU's curricula exceed the standard university requirements by emphasizing health maintenance and care in austere environments and under extreme circumstances. You have all learned about "good medicine in bad places" whether you are providing care or striving to understand the fundamental problems that affect human health.

Beyond that, our university makes additional claims on your physical resources to prepare most of you for active duty in our uniformed services.

All told, your years here have been marked by high expectations. I'm sure you will agree that those expectations have been justified by our exceptional goals.

It is USU's duty to not only educate physicians, nurses and scientists and to produce uniformed officers and leaders, but also to help forge outstanding human beings -- men and women of integrity, compassion, humility ....and loyalty to the values that make our country great.

**(Brief pause)**

I am confident that each of you has met these goals.

Whether you are nurses, researchers, or physicians; whether you are civilians, or military or Public Health Service officers, you are well prepared for your life after USU --

a life that I know will be committed to continued learning: to updating your professional education, perfecting your health care skills, and

advancing the cause of science, military medicine and public health, and caring for people in harm's way.

**(Slight pause)**

I want to reflect with you on this journey of lifelong learning, whether you undertake it as civilians or as servicemen and -women in uniform. Each of you will encounter along the way a wealth of new knowledge you will need to master. I urge you to commit yourselves wholeheartedly to this task of lifelong learning: from your patients, from your colleagues, and eventually, from your students.

I know of no other human endeavor that is as exciting, as challenging, and as promising as the one you have chosen.

The opportunities ahead of you to make your mark as scientists or healthcare providers by helping advance the march of medical progress are boundless -- but so is the need.

When I spoke earlier about this university as the nation's health sciences academy, I was referring to our role not only in educating the next generation of healthcare professionals, but also in developing the ideas, expertise and policy that will help guide our nation.

This is no time for complacency: you as the future leaders will need to think about the policy of healthcare as well as the science of medicine.

You will have to master new skills and absorb new knowledge as part of a fast-changing system of healthcare delivery.

You will practice your profession around the world and at the cutting edge of science.

Collectively, we have much to accomplish.

**(Brief pause)**

As physicians, nurses, and scientists you could not graduate in a time of greater need.

Our nation is challenged as never before. The university's alumni and faculty have been called to serve around the world: in Landstuhl, Afghanistan, Iraq. You have heard of their service in Chad, Suriname, and within the United States. They have cared for those wounded in combat and in natural catastrophes, and have brought healthcare, training, and education to many nations. They are also dedicated to developing new vaccines and treatments.

**(Brief pause)**

In public health and military medicine there is an additional challenge, beyond that which confronts all of us in healthcare. It has to do with the environment in which you have chosen to practice. Your civilian counterparts are being educated to provide care "at the door." You have been educated to provide care on a global scale, often under adverse conditions.

Lt. Col. Kelly Murray, a graduate of the School of Medicine class of 1991 is an Army physician now on her second deployment to Iraq. Lt. Col. Murray earned three Bronze Star medals, one with Valor, and a Purple Heart, for saving the lives of her colleagues and numerous others in several different roadside attacks, providing care under fire and at great risk to her own life.

A Navy psychologist, LT Jeffrey Cook, a 2001 graduate of our Clinical Psychology program, is responsible for the day to day mental health needs of more than 5,000 crew members aboard the USS George Washington.

During the height of Hurricane Katrina Major Betsy Mamja, a 2000 graduate of the nurse anesthesia program, and Capt. Andrew Allen, a class of 2002 physician alumnus, worked together to perform a

successful c-section delivery by flashlight at Keesler Air Force Base medical center.

You are about to join these distinguished alumni who are using their education to make a difference.

PAUSE

I will conclude---to your relief no doubt--- by saying that for some -- and perhaps many -- of you, the journey of life's learning may well include lessons for which there are no textbooks or manuals, challenges to which you will have to find your own answer.

I can offer no better fare-well than to quote from an 1894 essay by my favorite physician and philosopher, Sir William Osler, which he addressed to an army sergeant:

“There are regions in *partibus infidelium*” – Dr. Osler wrote, referring to parts of the world with a different faith -- “to which you will go as missionaries, carrying the gospel of loyalty to truth in the science and in the art of medicine, and your lives of devotion may prove to many a stimulating example.”

With that lofty and sincere hope, I congratulate you on entering a life of accomplishments and service and wish you all professional success, and personal happiness.