

REMARKS FROM BERNADETTE GRAYSON

2009 OHSU School of Medicine Hooding Ceremony

Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall

June 4, 2008

It is a profound privilege to celebrate with you as we receive our hoods and diplomas this day. This is indeed a momentous day in our lives: the culmination of years of work, sweat and tears. No one gets to this point without a good measure of intelligence, perseverance and the ability to jump through the hoops necessary to satisfy the requirements of each respective program.

Personally I feel a little bit like one of those fancy show dogs since I have had to fulfill the requirements for two degrees. I am grateful today its over.

Over the past 5 years, I have often been asked what I do for a living. I say “well I am getting my doctorate in Neuroscience. They say wow. So you can do like brain surgery. My reply is “no, no I am a research scientist.” And they look in a disappointed manner, “so what are your researching?” And I answer “well, the brain control of obesity.” They brighten and say, “then can you help me. I need to lose weight.” And then I have to break it to them. And once again I apologize and say “no, I work at the Primate center. I plan on curing obesity in monkeys, one obese monkey at

a time.” I am sad to say that I may have to devote my life to this noble goal. There are quite a few pudgy monkeys who need their weight-loss miracle.

What is unique about graduating from a school like OHSU is that each one of us is linked to human health, some in a more loose way but inevitably with a potential impact to improve human health. Curing, improving and maintaining human health is definitely something one can easily be passionate about. Through our work we can ensure a society where future generations can experience good health.

What has been impressed on my heart over the last few months as I prepared by dissertation and manuscripts was this latin phrase, *nanos gigantum humeris insidentes*. That’s amazing in itself since I have never gotten the chance to study latin. What that phrase translates to is that we are but dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants. We are but dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giant. I will take some poetic license in the interpretation of this quote for my own life.

Though we can each say, “ Indeed I have attained this degree. I have accomplished a great feat”. But that feat is not attained in a vacuum. For me it started with the parents who gave me life, the teachers who have taught me, the friends who have built me up, the experiences I have had, the things I have done. For me it has been my advisors who invested time and energy in me, and down to the minutia. My dissertation had 384 citations of work by people before me. And each of those 384 manuscripts had 30-50 other citations. The work I did needed to be placed in

the context of a larger body of research. The way we conduct medicine, clinical practice and basic science all relies on the work of others. We have great cause to rejoice today. We are dwarfed by the tremendous work done by those before us. And we are simultaneously the giants with the great responsibility of forging the way for those to come.

