

REMARKS FROM RUDY KIMMERLING  
2009 OHSU School of Medicine Hooding Ceremony  
Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall  
June 4, 2009

Thank you, Dr. Keenan. You will have to excuse my nervousness but this is the largest group I have spoken in front of since my bar mitzvah, and I am kind of having flashbacks. There are more similarities than you might think. That day I became a man, and on this day I have realized the absolute fear that accompanies adult responsibilities. On top of that, every time I look over my shoulder and see Lynn Loriaux, the bearded sage in black robes, I feel like the rabbi is staring me down wondering if I have properly practiced my speech. I guess one difference is that there were actually more PhD's and physicians in the synagogue for my bar mitzvah than there are here today- but this is a pretty good turnout.

But moving forward in time the reason I am on the stage today is an effect of my being elected president at the beginning of fourth year. When it comes to student government people are of two minds- one group feels that it is a self-

congratulatory waste of time and the other thinks that it is an altruistic endeavor that advances the lot of all students. I would like to acknowledge those people here today in the latter category... mom, dad, its great to see you here, thanks so much for coming. For those of you in the former category... faculty... classmates... guests... my lovely wife Christina... let me assure you that my election was no popularity contest. I ran completely unopposed and unfettered by any challenge from any of my more talented, better-looking classmates.

I would like to speak to you today about debt... but not the boring debt you may expect to hear about. I am actually extremely confident that the graduates you see here today will be able to pay off their student loans and live prosperous lives in the years and decades to come. Last time I checked, John Saultz nor any other physician I know was down on Burnside holding up a sign that said "will percuss liver for food." If you doubt that med school debt is good debt, speak with any of the hundreds of interviewees for the class of 2013 who will not be offered a position in the SOM this summer. I doubt any grads here would go back in time and volunteer to switch spots with them. That is because matriculation to a 4 year allopathic medical school is the differentiating step in the education of prospective

physicians. Once an individual crosses this threshold their likelihood of reaching the desired endpoint is upwards of 90%-regardless of what their undergraduate statistics were.

This is because of the rigorous and equalizing education we have been provided at OHSU, and this is where our debt truly begins. We owe a debt to the academic faculty, who were virtually always volunteering away from clinical or lab time to teach us in the first two years.

We owe a debt to the TSO support staff and deans office staff, who have patiently awaited the mellowing that happens over time as medical students slowly start seeing behaving less entitled. We certainly owe a debt to the clinical faculty who patiently sat and listened through our excruciatingly long and disorganized early case presentations and tolerated our extreme lack of knowledge and practical ability throughout the early (and, in truth, most of the late) clinical years.

We owe a debt to those residents who took time to do some teaching at a point in their training where time was short. We owe a debt to our classmates and peers for providing timely help on the wards and commiseration- in all of those times where you feel like you don't know anything about medicine, it is nice to have people by your side who candidly express their

own feelings of ineptitude. We certainly owe a debt to our supportive friends and family, not least of which are the spouses and children who have submitted their own careers, homes, and friendships to the Diaspora inducing madness that is the match. And we owe perhaps the largest debt to the patients throughout Portland and the state of Oregon, who kindly allowed us to learn on them in their times of greatest vulnerability and need, when they could have said "get your hands out of there Rudy I am birthing a child!"

Dr. Keenan told us on day one of medical school orientation that students are less confident about their knowledge and ability on the day that they graduate medical school than they are when they matriculate. This is undeniably true. Anybody who is starting an internship in the next three weeks in this crowd and tells you they are not scared witless is lying. The protective womb of medical school will soon be vomiting them forth into the cold noisy world that is residency and actual responsibility for the care and outcomes of ill individuals. One of the gifts of med school is that it makes you acutely aware of how much there is that you don't know. The IV of humility is rammed into your arm on day one of the 3rd year, and is left running full bore until the bag is depleted at some point in the future as yet to be

determined. There is a fine line between confidence and cockiness, but our present emotional state lies nowhere near that line, instead huddled nearer to that corner of the spectrum labeled trepidation and indecisiveness. Humility is a quality that many of the finest physicians and role models on campus have balanced with an appropriate confidence in their skills, knowledge, and abilities. Perhaps remembering the debt we owe all of our educators, patients, and peers will imbue us with a measure of the empathy, humility, and confidence that we must balance to become model clinicians and care providers. If it does, we will not only have been bar mitzvahed today to become true men and women of medicine, but will also be the mensches that our grandmas always told us to be. And if you don't know what a mensch is, just ask Rabbi Loriaux after the ceremony. Mazel Tov, class of 2009!