



REMARKS FROM DEAN MARK RICHARDSON  
2014 OHSU School of Medicine Hooding Ceremony  
Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall  
June 2, 2014

Thank you, Dr. Mejicano, for the kind introduction.

To our guests – family, friends, fellow faculty and colleagues – welcome. We are glad to see you here today.

Your support and guidance have been crucial to allowing our graduates to reach this moment, this milestone day.

To our graduates – congratulations. You’ve done it. What a great day.

Today, in my brief remarks, I will focus on one word and its definition.

Privilege.

Why?

I’ll tell you a story to explain.

For those of you who don’t know, I am a pediatric otolaryngologist, my specialty is more commonly known as ear, nose and throat surgery. I focus my efforts on children.

Recently, I was at the departure gate at PDX – a small flight – from Portland to Seattle.

I had just taken a seat, when a woman walked towards me.

“Are you Dr. Mark Richardson?” she asked.



After making sure she was not an irate faculty with intent to do bodily harm; I admitted I was Dr. Mark Richardson.

“Yes,” I said, a little surprised.

“Twenty-five years ago, you provided care to my son. Do you remember?”

This was remarkable on two fronts:

She could recognize me from twenty-five years ago, and I could remember her and her little boy.

He was a charming two year old newly diagnosed with cystic fibrosis.

He was having serious sinus and pulmonary difficulties, complications from his disease.

This child was my patient for several years. It was stressful, and the treatments were not easy on him – or his family.

We were successful though, the team treating him.

“How is your son now?” I asked.

She pulled out the iPhone, scrolled through photos – a proud mom – and talked about how he was working in computer programming, and that while his health was still fragile, he was doing well.

And then she thanked me. She told me that I had made a real difference in her son’s life.



Of course, it wasn't just me. There was an entire team of people working to improve his health, not to mention the research that shaped our treatment.

It just so happened that I was the "face" of this success story.

I was so incredibly pleased to learn how well this boy – now a man – was doing.

I am going to tell you the same thing I told her, it was our true privilege to be such an important part of their lives.

The standard Webster definition: A privilege is "a special opportunity to do something that makes you proud." It's not unique to the health care professions, but it sure is plentiful in our fields. Teachers for example, have this opportunity too. Members of the clergy as well.

The health care professions – all of them – give us the *privilege* to make a deep, meaningful and lasting impact on people.

Some of you will care directly for patients, others will discover a new cure or uncover data patterns that will improve the health of populations, some of you will influence health care policy or you will combine many of these efforts in the future.

No matter what specific path you pursue, you will have an impact on people's lives.

I have reached the 30-year mark in my career just as you embark on the beginning of your careers.



During these years, I have accumulated a great deal of experience, but I'm not sure that necessarily translates into any sort of wisdom I can impart.

But here's one thing I know for certain: we all get very busy, health professions are demanding, balancing family life and career is hard to do.

And in the frenetic day-to-day activity, it can be all too easy to forget the core reasons why we chose the health care professions.

And then one day, a mother walks up to you in the airport and shows you a photo of her son, now grown up, and helps you remember.

What a gift.

I'll use the word now one more time to close.

On behalf of the faculty of the School of Medicine, it has been our privilege to be part of your education.

You are all remarkable and we are so very proud of you – today and for what you will do tomorrow.

Congratulations Class of 2014!

Thank you.

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