

REMARKS FROM DEAN MARK RICHARDSON, MD, MBA
OHSU School of Medicine White Coat Ceremony
OHSU Auditorium
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Future physicians: you are the OHSU School of Medicine Class of 2014.

Thank you for that kind introduction and for the honor of speaking today.

Future physicians: you are the OHSU School of Medicine Class of 2014.

Welcome to everyone!

Our newest students and I met briefly during their orientation sessions earlier this week. But this is the first time I have had the opportunity to welcome the families and friends of our newest class.

I am so pleased to see all of you here.

It is a privilege to educate the members of the Class of 2014. It is one we take seriously. 123 years ago we welcomed our first class to this medical school.

Back then, our school was located in a small former grocery store in NW Portland – a rickety building long since torn down.

Our entering class was 15 students.

And 12 of them were on the medical school's football team.

Our circumstances have changed a lot over the past 123 years.

We are in a new location with a lot more buildings – some of them quite nice and very modern – a few still rickety, but that's okay, there's a rich history in our old buildings.



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We have a scientific and clinical enterprise recognized throughout the world for our commitment to excellence.

We no longer have a football team – although I am hopeful that we can entice Nike to redesign our hospital scrubs and other uniforms for an updated sporty look.

We do have an aerial tram – If you haven't yet, I encourage all of you to take a ride; the view of the city and mountains is unbeatable.

While our physical surroundings have changed, the *reason* we are here is exactly the same as 123 years ago.

We have chosen this profession of physician, or perhaps it has chosen us, because we want to contribute to a better, healthier world.

Everyone in this room today should be very proud. Getting to this point requires drive, passion, commitment and intellectual discipline.

This year, our school received 4,548 applications from qualified, talented prospective students, all of whom dream of being a physician, and all of whom wanted to be in a room like this today.

Only the best and the brightest will don the White Coat here today.

And by best and brightest, I don't mean those with the highest grades or best test scores. I mean those who were recognized by our exceptional admissions staff as having the "right stuff" to become extraordinary physicians and to make significant and lasting contributions to our society.

Let me tell you about you – Class of 2014.

About 77% of you are from Oregon with the rest from many different states. Some were raised in rural areas and bring that unique perspective to this class. Fifty-six percent are women and the mean age of the entire class is 26 years old.

Many of you are just out of college with their BA or BS degrees. Others have earned Masters and three of you have earned PhDs. Many of you are changing careers. In your class are



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veterans who served our country in Iraq and Afghanistan, an opera singer, a journalist, a mill operator, a financier, scientists and many other interesting prior careers.

All of you have shown an impressive commitment to health care through your work with autistic children, at tribal health centers, in epidemiology, public health, mental health and much more.

You are an exceptional group.

The four years ahead of you are like nothing you can imagine now. These four years will fundamentally change you, as they should.

I can remember perfectly the day I received my White Coat. I still have it. I was so proud to wear it.

I still am. It's yellowed and aged now, but like an army dress uniform that veterans pull out for special occasions, I still pull it out from time to time. It doesn't fit as well, but putting it on still always brings back a rush of memories and focuses my thoughts on what the White Coat represents.

The White Coat is a symbol that you now belong to a community of health care professionals all of whom have the privilege of healing. Every health care profession has their own symbol and all of them confer the same responsibility.

Accepting the White Coat today means you join that community of health care professionals and accept—the charge—to respect and protect the dignity and autonomy of patients, both in good health and in ill health, and to do your very best for them at every moment.

But, as you enter the distinguished profession of medicine today, you are confronted by a set of challenges unique to our time.

While it is convenient to think that health care reform is “done” now that federal legislation was passed—nothing could be farther from the truth.

We have much work ahead of us if we are going to be successful at transforming our health care system from what it is now to what it has the potential to become.



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I believe we are at the very beginning of fundamental change that I have no doubt will sweep across our system, as patients see the value of these changes to their own health and well-being.

What will this change look like? The health care community – in which you are now fully vested members – will work together and take responsibility for reinventing health care in ways that both lower cost and provide higher quality.

When you look back 30 years from now, in the year 2040, I am optimistic that the health care world you remember from today will be vastly different from that future. Not just because of technology advances and new cures, but because it will be a world in which high quality, affordable health care is accessible to everyone.

But now let's return to the present.

Today, as you wear the White Coat for the first time, I ask you to think about these next four years as a journey forward – not just to the next test or lab assignment or clinical rotation – but rather a journey to your first patient.

Who will she be?

What health care issues will he face?

Will she be crying from happiness at the news of a new baby or a new cure?

What will their story be?

Starting from this moment, your daily responsibility is to acquire the knowledge and skills so that when your first patient says to you: "Doctor, what do you think?" – you will be prepared to offer the help they need.

Welcome to the School of Medicine.



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