

2020/2021 Commencement Ceremonies
May 12-14, 2021
Main Campus, Memorial Field

1. NATIONAL ANTHEM: introduced by DEAN AKL.

DEAN AKL approaches the podium; returns to seat after the playing of the National Anthem.

Please rise for the National Anthem.

DEAN AKL returns to seat.

2. WELCOME: President Julie E. WOLLMAN.

President WOLLMAN approaches the podium.

Good morning and please be seated.

Despite the pandemic and the enormous challenges of the past year, it is wonderful to be together. This is a day that we have long been waiting for! I'm so very proud of all of our graduates.

Trustee Lou Rodriguez, Provost Andrew Workman, Dean Fred Akl, faculty, and family and friends of the graduates,

“Welcome.”

It is my great pleasure to be with you here today.

Graduates, I congratulate you on your graduation and encourage you, in the midst of all the excitement and frenzy

of this day, to find a few calm moments to reflect on all you've done to earn this special moment.

Do you remember the first time you set foot on campus or in your online classroom as a Widener student?

Try to remember.

My guess is that you were filled with equal parts eagerness and anxiety—actually, probably more anxiety on that first day— as you wondered what the years ahead held for you.

On that first day, and maybe a few tough days since then, you might have questioned whether or not you would ever see your graduation day.

A lot has happened between then and now. Let me repeat that – a lot has happened between then and now! We have

just lived through a year and a half that none of us could have anticipated or envisioned.

But even before the pandemic, at times the road to this day was a bit bumpy and the trip undoubtedly took unexpected turns.

Many of you juggled a range of campus activities with work and family responsibilities, not to mention the relentless pressures of the pandemic.

But you persevered, you trusted in professors and staff who saw your great potential, you believed in yourself, and you made it happen.

You made it to this momentous day!

Of course, there were other people who believed in you, too.

Your family and close friends loved and supported you, and sometimes even pushed you to do your very best.

And do you know what? Even when they didn't say anything, they were always quietly cheering you on. This is their day, too.

I think they deserve a big round of applause. (APPLAUSE)

Among your ranks are some of the most talented students I have ever met.

You used your education and leadership skills to address some of the world's most challenging problems and to seek common ground across diverse perspectives.

You stepped up whenever there was a need, rolled up your sleeves, or jumped into challenging conversations, and made a difference.

As you start the next chapter of your life, here's my assignment for you. That's right. The assignments are not quite over!

Your final assignment for your degree: DO EVEN MORE.

Don't be afraid to challenge yourself.

Ask the hard questions and continue showing the same grit and determination you've already demonstrated.

Continue to seek common ground to improve our communities, our country and the world.

There's always more to do, more to learn, more to achieve.

And yes, there are always more problems to solve.

The world needs leaders with the knowledge, courage, and compassion you honed here at Widener.

Be ambitious, keep your aspirations alive, and keep working toward them.

Your Widener education gave you the tools to be a game changer not only in your profession, but in your community, across the country, and around the world.

I know you will put these tools to work in ways that will continue to make us all exceptionally proud!

Just as Widener is now part of your personal life story, you are now part of the rich fabric of Widener's 200 year history. A history based on leadership and social responsibility.

Your Widener experience and all you've achieved is now interwoven with the generations of PMC and Widener alumni who came before you.

As new alumni, you will be part of a fiercely proud heritage. And always know that we are fiercely proud of you!

PRESIDENT WOLLMAN returns to seat.

3. PRESENTATION OF GRADUATES. DEAN AKL approaches the podium. DEAN AKL states:

President Wollman, shall we get to what everyone is waiting for!?

Will the candidates for all degrees please rise?

President Wollman, the students standing before you have successfully completed the courses of study prescribed for their degrees.

On recommendation of the faculty, I am pleased, therefore, to present them to you. [PAUSE]

Graduates, please come forward.

DEAN AKL APPROACHES THE TABLE WITH THE DIPLOMA TUBES AND PREPARES TO PLACE TUBES ON THE TABLE. THE TUBES SHOULD BE PLACED ON THE TABLE, AND THEN THE DEAN WILL TAKE A STEP BACK AS THE STUDENT PASSES THE TABLE SO THAT A MINIMUM SIX FOOT DISTANCE IS MAINTAINED.

GRADUATES CROSS THE STAGE.

DEAN AKL RETURNS TO SEAT.

4. **PRESENTATION AND CONFERRAL OF DEGREES: President WOLLMAN.**

After all graduates are seated, President WOLLMAN approaches the podium.

WOLLMAN reads:

Graduates, will you please stand?

Faculty, will you please stand?

Under the authority vested in me by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the State of Delaware and the Trustees of Widener University, I confer upon you the degrees for which you have successfully completed the prescribed courses of study, and for which you have been recommended by the appropriate college or school faculty.

This is signified by your diploma and is conferred with all the rights, privileges and immunities appertaining thereto.

[PAUSE]

WIDENER UNIVERSITY GRADUATES – I SALUTE YOU!”

And now, in recognition of your graduation, all baccalaureate degree recipients, please move your tassel from the right to the left!

[APPLAUSE!]

PRESIDENT WOLLMAN returns to seat.

5. DEAN REMARKS: DEAN AKL APPROACHES THE PODIUM

Congratulations to the class of 2020 and the class of 2021-----

You are now and forever -----part of the Widener

engineering pride -----

And welcome to families and friends who are joining us today
to celebrate the achievements of our graduating students.

My name is Fred Akl, dean of the School of Engineering.

I am joined today by members of the engineering faculty:

Professor Mark Nicosia ----- Professor C. Michael Kelly-----

Professor Anita Singh-----Professor John Suarez

and Professor Sushma Chaubey.

I'm honored and proud to be speaking to you on this very special day----- I am truly honored to have been a witness to your transformational journey at Widener University.

I am also immensely proud of your many accomplishments that enabled you to complete your programs of study and to reach your educational goal despite the unprecedented challenges of the last year and a half. ----- Graduating with a Bachelor's or a Master's degree in engineering is an outstanding achievement worth a huge celebration under normal circumstances. -----It is even more so under the challenging times of recent months.

Today is an opportunity to express your gratitude to those who stood by you throughout the years, your parents, families, loved ones and guardian angels -----whether they are part of this celebration or are unable to attend.

I would like also to express my gratitude to our faculty and staff, who have taught you, -----mentored you, -----guided you -----and supported you in many ways to be a member of one of the most prestigious professions.

My sense of pride is further deepened by my belief that our programs in engineering have prepared today's graduates to make their communities, this country, and indeed the world, not only a more technologically advanced and connected place, -----but also more sustainable, safer, healthier and equitable.

You are now ready and capable to shape your career and pursue your dreams. -----Do so with confidence and compassion whether as an inventor of a new technology or a protector of the environment; ----- as a successful entrepreneur or a pioneer in advancing health and engineering better medicines; -----

as a proponent for renewable energy or access to clean water; ----- as a community leader or an advocate for a cause you believe in.

All of this and much more is possible. ----- The path forward is shaped by your determination. -----And always remember that earning a college degree is a privilege that sets you apart from your generation around the country and indeed around the globe. -----And your Widener engineering degree has prepared you well to improve the quality of life wherever your path may take you. -----

So be bold, -----be creative, -----be courageous -----
and above all ---be compassionate to the less fortunate.

In closing, I would like to leave each of you with the hope that
as you make your own choices over time, you will be able to
balance your drive for achievements with a commitment to
family and friends, -----to love and to play, -----to your
community and to humanity at large.

Class of 2020 and class of 2021-----from the bottom of my
heart, I wish each and every one you the very best.

May you all fare well on the journey ahead.

DEAN AKL returns to seat.

6. PRESIDENT'S CLOSING REMARKS: President WOLLMAN

Again, it is my great pleasure to congratulate our graduates and wish you the very best in your future endeavors. I hope to see many of you back here as students and also at alumni events, Homecoming, and other campus activities. We'll be waiting for you!

This concludes our commencement ceremony. Please remain seated until the graduates have recessed. The audience should follow the graduates starting with the front rows of the audience. Families, friends, and graduates should reunite at their vehicles.

7. THE RECESSIONAL

Order of Procession: Faculty, Students, Guests. Platform Party should remain on the stage until the graduates have recessed. The Platform Party will not recess.