

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

1. NATIONAL ANTHEM: introduced by DEAN LEAMAN.

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

Please rise for the National Anthem.

DEAN LEAMAN returns to seat.

2. WELCOME: President Julie E. WOLLMAN.

President WOLLMAN approaches the podium.

Good afternoon 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.

Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees Dr. Cynthia Sarnoski, Provost Andrew Workman, Dean David Leaman, 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 LEAMAN approaches the podium. DEAN LEAMAN 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 LEAMAN 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 LEAMAN 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 LEAMAN APPROACHES THE PODIUM

Introduction: 2021 and 2020 graduates, you deserve to be very proud! There was a pandemic that tried to stop you. You refused to be defeated. You are the irrepressibles!

In my brief remarks, I am going to address two questions:

What have we provided you at Widener? What have you achieved and contributed?

Part I: Whatever your major, at Widener we have helped you acquire both technical skills and human skills. You are Science majors who know how to lead diverse groups. You are Humanities majors who are digital whizzes. You are Social

Science majors who have learned research techniques and how to serve in helping professions. Yet if we only taught you skills, we came up short. During your years at Widener we also offered you opportunities to clarify and develop your values. The core values of Widener are respect, integrity, and excellence. These values are both social and intellectual. Respect includes care for the whole community. Integrity means being true to one's self in relationship with others. Excellence is to be intellectually curious, creative, to use evidence to test ideas, and to strive always for improvement.

Part II: Even more important to highlight today is what you have achieved during your years at Widener, what you have

contributed to our campus community and beyond. You are an amazing group. As I look out among you, I see...

Many of you who have presented research on subjects such as computer game design, gene expression in fruit flies, temperature dependence in goldfish muscle, your Honduras study trip, and specimens at Delaware Museum of Natural History

Several of you who regularly shared your experiences with prospective students at Widener Day and Accepted Students Days

I see... A star pole vaulter who also led the Biology Honor society, a computer science major who had lead roles in theatre productions, a field hockey player who student taught in Math, and a Biochem major who performed beautiful piano solos at campus concerts

A couple students who are already in the doctoral program in physical therapy and a graduating master's student who has applied his education in his work for a U.S. congressperson

I see... students who participated as CREW leaders, the Committee Responsible for Enhancing Widener, and other campus and community activities]

I see all of you! Each and every one of you has been a gift to us at Widener. Thank you!

Closing: I end my remarks with the words of a member of the 2021 graduating class:

Julia Klinger is graduating with a degree in psychology and a minor in sociology, and is entering a doctoral program in clinical psychology in the fall. She was recently interviewed for the Widener website. With her permission, I share a few of her words.

“After coming to Widener, my world view expanded and changed... Tutoring at Chester Upland School of the Arts was

one of the most rewarding experiences... In addition to glimpsing what it feels like to look different from everyone around you, I learned about funding disparities for schools in low-income communities, and began to think about... concepts of institutional racism for the first time... Widener has instilled me with a sense of confidence I lacked in high school. Prior to Widener, I did not know what my strengths or interests were, let alone what I wanted to do with my life after college. Now I have a sense of purpose and direction. I am confident about my abilities and what the future has in store.”

We congratulate each of you for who you have become during your time at Widener. We wish you all “a sense of

purpose and direction” in your next steps. We are very happy that you will always be part of the Widener community. Go Pride!

DEAN LEAMAN 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.