

# Office of the President

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## Selected Speeches

### Doctoral Hooding Ceremony

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University of Maryland Graduate School  
May 14, 2015  
SMC Campus Center, Elm Ballroom

Thank you, Bruce.

Good afternoon and congratulations to our brand-new PhDs! Well done.

I know this is an incredibly important day for all of you—as it should be. But it's an important day for the University, as well. Because, in large part, it's your scholarship and your research—your dedication to your discipline and your groundbreaking work in it—that make UMB such a compelling place to be.

And, while I thank you for contributing so richly to the University's acclaim, it's clearly *not* why you dedicated the last several years of your lives to this degree. You know better than anyone that the path to a PhD is long and hard, exhausting and—yes—frustrating. It's not often you're asked to devote years of your life to something very specific, often esoteric, and then—at the very end—made to publicly defend your decision to do so.

And so I'm grateful for the passion and perseverance that have brought you to this day.

I'm also grateful for what your scholarly journey represents. In a very real way, your scholarship is a profound act of service—with significant material effect: It will make people healthier and happier, lives fuller and safer. There is no worthier goal.

But then there's the transcendent effect, too: Your work will advance our understanding of ourselves and each other. It will help us test the world around us—find its limitations and its possibilities. Your work will shrink the unknown, diminish the untried, and expand our human capacity—not just for knowledge and technique, but for care and consideration and compassion.

Your work betters humanity—our nature, our outlook, our optimism—what we prize and what we strive for. It contributes to a richer intellectual life, where questions are welcomed and curiosity rewarded—where an open, vigorous mind is valued above all else.

And, finally, your work is scaffolding for future scholarship. Whatever you care to call it—the bedrock, the soil, the spark—it will be the leaping-off point for study and innovation we can scarcely imagine today. Your ideas will inspire a whole *new* generation of thinkers who will owe a portion of their success to yours. And, in that way, the work you've done here at UMB will live on.

I know that today is just the beginning for you, that even greater things will come, that discovery and innovation will punctuate long and important careers.

And so I ask that, as you go forward, you continue to be guided by the responsibilities your degree confers: to pursue truth and prioritize compassion; to improve the lives of others and the world in which they live; to seek wisdom in your research and discernment in your data; to expand the boundaries of human understanding; and to contribute doggedly to a body of knowledge that will help perfect us as a people.

Thank you—and congratulations!

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