

## 'We Showed Grit': UMSON Class of 2025 Steps Into Nursing's Next Era

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Family, friends, and faculty celebrate the achievements of the University of Maryland School of Nursing's Class of 2025 in two Convocation ceremonies.

*Photo: Zuri Truth Gilgeous, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduate, celebrates at UMSON's Convocation. (Photo by Matthew D'Agostino)*



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Don't tell Hiu Yu Chan, BSN '25, that the American Dream is dead.

As she walked across the stage of Baltimore's Hippodrome Theatre on May 20, one of 454 graduates in the University of Maryland School of Nursing's (UMSON) Class of 2025, she proved it is alive and well.

Chan, the selected student speaker for the first of UMSON's two Convocation ceremonies, came to the United States from Hong Kong just four years ago, "chasing the American Dream," she said, and pursued a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree against the odds.

With English as a second language and little cultural familiarity, she said every lecture and textbook required her to review material multiple times to grasp the content and the context. But she was determined to follow her passion to earn her degree and become a nurse.

"Today, we celebrate more than just a degree," Chan said. "We celebrate survival, growth, and resilience."

She said she was full of doubt and insecurity and often asked herself, "Am I really good enough to be a nurse?"

Convocation proved that she was. And that she was not alone.

"Let me say this from the bottom of my heart: I came to the United States chasing the American Dream, and today, standing here in my cap and gown, I know that dream has come true," Chan said.

During UMSON's two ceremonies — a morning celebration for BSN and entry-into-nursing Master of Science in Nursing Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) graduates and an afternoon event for other master's and doctoral graduates — the school conferred 231 BSN degrees, 89 master's degrees, 126 Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degrees, two PhDs, and six certificates, resulting in 259 new nurses entering the workforce.

The ceremonies spotlighted perseverance as a defining trait of the Class of 2025.

"You worked hard, you stayed up late, you started your day early, you sacrificed so much," Yolanda Ogbolu, PhD '11, MS '05, BSN '04, NNP, FNAP, FAAN, the Bill and Joanne Conway Dean of the University of Maryland School of Nursing and professor, said in her opening remarks. "Yes, you truly earned your degree, and you should be proud of your accomplishments."

At the afternoon master's and doctoral ceremony, student speaker Alex Hatcher, a DNP graduate of the Nurse Anesthesia specialty, recalled how she received a book from Jacqueline C. Mitchell, PhD '25, MS '07, CRNA, FAANA, director of clinical education, on the first day of orientation; Mitchell was in the audience as one of the two PhD graduates. The book, "Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance," by Angela Duckworth, left a lasting impression on Hatcher and reminded her of her fellow graduates.

“Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals,” Hatcher said, quoting from the book. “Grit is sticking with your future, day in, day out. Not just for the month, but for years. And working really hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like it’s a marathon, not a sprint.”

Hatcher added, “This journey was not easy, in fact it was the most challenging and the most demanding goal I’ve ever worked toward, and there were many times when giving up seemed like the only option. But we didn’t. We showed grit.”

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