

# Commencement Ceremony | April 29, 2018

*Amended version May 23, 2018*

---

Thank you! Good morning, welcome, and most importantly,  
CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to the nearly 700 new UM-Flint graduates whom we celebrate today. We honor the hard work and achievement that has brought you here, to this stage, today.

Welcome to the parents, the grandparents, spouses, partners, extended family, and friends here to celebrate with us today.

Few of us reach this milestone alone. Let's take a moment to thank your village, those in your life who have supported and encouraged you along the way.

Thank you as well to the UM-Flint faculty and staff who care so deeply for our students. Each student that steps foot on our campus relies on you for guidance, support, knowledge, and encouragement. You, too, deserve congratulations for the role you played in our students' success.

Graduates, you have worked hard. You have completed the requirements for a Michigan degree, you have enhanced your ability to think critically, developed expertise in a field, and are prepared to continue contributing to society.

Your degree will be a foundation for the path you are pursuing.

Some of you completed your degree while working full-time, others finished this semester and are now thinking about graduate school or your next job, and for some this is a second degree or an advanced degree. However you arrived, this is a *milestone*, a marker of your academic accomplishment.

In addition to the knowledge of your field, the research experiences, and the "aha" moments you have had at UM-Flint, you have developed a series of

relationships—relationships between you and new ideas, with classmates that you studied and worked with, and with faculty who facilitated conversations that spurred new ways of seeing or understanding.

As you finish your time at UM-Flint I trust you have confidence that you have developed skills and relationships you can carry forward with you. When I finished my degree I was aware of how much I didn't know, but knew I had developed knowledge and skills that would assist me in finding out. You can find out anything you need to know for that grad school application, that next job or the problem you need to solve in your current job.

Former President Obama once said:

***“We did not come to fear the future. We came here to shape it.”<sup>1</sup>***

I like to think at the University of Michigan-Flint we are in the business of creating the kinds of learning environments that constantly explore ways to shape the future and at a time when the world around us desperately needs leaders to engage across differences, to contribute every day to our communities, that we are graduating that collection of citizens the ones who will shape the future.

With my lens the future looks bright because you will be shaping that future. I am in this arena today with a group of inspirational difference makers. You, and those who inspired you... think about it for a moment.

Our students, faculty and staff have provided countless hours of service in and with the Flint community and greater Genesee county. Long before the water crisis and in the months since, you and those who came before you lived and worked here, studied, volunteered and through research and community based learning, solved problems, and enhanced the quality of life in this city, in this region. This is part of the benefit of UM-Flint being an anchor institution in Flint. We are invested and we dig in. You've dug in and made a difference in ways that have changed you, and inspired me.

---

<sup>1</sup> Obama, B. (2009) *Presidential Health Care Address*

Our mission is to provide an excellent education and enhance life in this region... and because of relationships, this arena will continue to be filled with students like you making a difference throughout the region. Today you join over 45,000 UM-F graduates who are committed to making a difference in their communities.

You are leaving UM-Flint prepared for the future—with the critical capacity, inventiveness, imagination, and curiosity that comes from a broad and deep liberal arts education.

My hope is:

- That each of you takes what you've learned here, both in the classroom and out of it, and makes the world a better place.
- That you leave UM-Flint committed to direct your talents toward the world's deep needs, with a generosity of spirit that will guide your activities and your interactions with others wherever you go<sup>2</sup>.

Today we celebrate your success as you graduate with a Michigan degree.

Know that you are now and always will be a part of our UM-Flint our legacy as “leaders and best!”

Congratulations to you all, and Go Blue!

---

<sup>2</sup> Skorton, D. (2015) *147<sup>th</sup> Cornell University Commencement Address*