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Law School News: Dr. Fauci Calls On RWU Graduates To Preserve 'Truth Justice, Diversity And Equality' 05/20/2022

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Law School News

Dr. Fauci Calls on RWU Graduates to Preserve ‘Truth, Justice, Diversity and Equality’

RWU’s 1,330 graduates urged to “think beyond yourself and to use your education to make a difference in the world.”

May 20, 2022 By Jill Rodrigues '05



BRISTOL, R.I. – Confront injustice, value interdisciplinary collaboration, and act with a sense of collective responsibility to each other. These lessons provided by the Covid-19 pandemic will lead to thriving lives that make a difference in the world, Dr. Anthony S. Fauci told Roger Williams University graduates in his keynote address on Friday.

Evoking university namesake and Rhode Island founder Roger Williams’ “passionate advocacy for justice and equity,” Dr. Fauci encouraged the Class of 2022 to “draw on wisdom, courage, empathy and ingenuity to tackle entrenched elements of injustice” in society and to embrace the power of seeking diverse perspectives and working together across disciplines.

“Over four decades I have had the privilege of helping to lead responses to multiple public health emergencies where I have repeatedly witnessed the unqualified advantage of forging robust interdisciplinary collaborations,” said Dr. Fauci, who has worked at the forefront of national and global public health crises as Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases since 1984 and has served as the chief medical advisor to seven U.S. presidents. “In the words of a famous African proverb: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

While they should take these principles to heart when commencing the next part of their journey, Dr. Fauci emphasized that each graduate has already put these into practice to get to this momentous day of earning a college degree. “Your very presence here today is testimony to your extraordinary resilience, resolve and character that enabled you to complete your studies and to graduate amid immense difficulties and uncertainties. Quite frankly, I am in awe of you for this.”

With their professional lives ahead of them or already underway, Dr. Fauci said, “I have no doubt that you in the Roger Williams University Class of 2022 are going to be leaders in strengthening the bonds in our society and in safeguarding truth, justice, diversity and equality, in building a bright future together.”

RWU celebrated its 1,330 graduates in a university-wide Commencement ceremony on Friday, May 20, conferring 999 bachelor’s degrees, 179 graduate degrees and 152 law degrees. It was the first time in university history that RWU honored all graduates together over a comprehensive day of celebrations, with a main ceremony in the morning followed by individual School ceremonies throughout the day.

2022 Law Commencement











In his remarks to the graduates, RWU President Ioannis Miaoulis told graduates that he hoped their Roger Williams education has instilled a passion for lifelong learning and growth.

“The only way to reach your dreams is to step into new things and unfamiliar situations and challenge yourself and learn to reach your dreams. RWU has trained you and given you the tools to recreate your own experiential learning opportunities,” Miaoulis said.

But don’t forget, he added, that their time at Roger Williams has also shown them the value of leadership and “to think and act beyond yourself.”

“A Roger Williams education is a call to think beyond yourself and to use your education to make a difference in the world. We need you to think about the impact of your actions on others, the impacts of a business decision on the environment, the impact of a policy on marginalized individuals,” Miaoulis said. “Graduates of the Roger Williams University Class of 2022 now is your time to go forth into the world with confidence and resolve and make your mark on the world.

Timothy Baxter, a 1983 graduate of Roger Williams, parent of an alum and former President and CEO of Samsung Electronics North America, celebrated sharing another Commencement ceremony at his alma mater with the next generation of alumni.

“I have a unique vantage point to see how Roger Williams continues to grow and change over the years,” said Baxter, who serves as Chairman of the RWU Board of Trustees. “The university took a chance on me, offered me many opportunities, challenged me, and gave me the confidence I needed to be successful in my life and career. I never could have imagined that I would grow to become CEO of a \$30 billion tech company and surely never imagined I would be the chair of the RWU Board, and I credit RWU with giving me that foundation.”

As they continue onto their next steps, Baxter urged the graduates to “stay connected with RWU, other alumni and professors. These are true friends you have made here – 40 years later, two of my best friends today are alumni.”

Student undergraduate speaker Jordan Peck ’22 spoke about the friendships, spirit of caring and academic rigor he and his class experienced that will prepare them for any path they choose.

“We learned what it takes to pave the road for our careers, despite the potholes we encountered. It was these experiences that helped us gain clarity on what we love and how to adapt and plan for our futures. Just like some of you may feel, we can’t always know what lies ahead – personally or professionally – but knowing what we can control each day, and taking the time to breathe in the present, we give our best possible future a chance to live,” said Peck, an Architecture major and Sustainability Studies minor from Enfield, N.H.

“I hope I speak for all of us when I say that our time in college has been one of the times, if not the time, in our lives in which we have grown the most as individuals.”

Their hard-earned diplomas are much like a pearl, said student graduate speaker Kimberly Tebow, a Pascoag, R.I., resident who graduated with a Master's in Public Administration. Pearls begin as one piece and transform through layers of growth into "something precious." As graduate students, many pursued their studies while also working full-time, raising children, or caring for family members, and "transformed that life to make room for all that encompasses earning that master's degree."

"Roger Williams University values the idea of transformation, characterized by academic rigor, critical thinking, collaboration, and community engagement. Much like a small speck is transformed into a pearl, the thing about being a graduate student is, we had lives that needed to be transformed," said Tebow. "I hope that you take your pearl however it is shaped, whatever color, however it shimmers, and begin transforming the world."

Law student speaker Diana Perez '18, L'22 – a "double Hawk" who earned her Bachelor's in Criminal Justice and a Juris Doctor at RWU – thanked the faculty and staff for making her seven-year journey a success and called on her fellow graduates to use their education to make a meaningful impact in the world.

"I ask you all to continue to fight, advocate, and be heard," said Perez, of North Providence, R.I. "I know you all came here with drive and passion and now we have been given this fire of resilience and let it continue to burn bright."

During the university ceremony, Roger Williams University presented an honorary degree to Dr. Fauci, for dedicating his career to leading the nation's research and response to infectious diseases and for shaping the practices and policies that create healthy and resilient communities. RWU and the School of Law also conferred honorary degrees to Rachel S. Rollins, United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts; Chief Judge John N. McConnell, Jr., Chief Judge of the United States District Court of Rhode Island; and Justice Francis X. Flaherty, retired Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

U.S. Attorney Rollins – the chief federal law enforcement officer of Massachusetts and a trailblazer in the legal field as the first Black woman to hold that position, the first woman to be elected Suffolk County District Attorney and first woman of color to hold the position of District Attorney in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts – delivered the Commencement address at the School of Law ceremony.

"Ours is a noble profession. At every single critical moment in our country's history, lawyers have been at the forefront and on the front lines changing laws, sparking conversations, and starting movements, striving to always make our great nation even better and more inclusive," Rollins said.

Do not be afraid of failure – "change rarely happens when we are happy and comfortable," she urged the graduates. "I want you to get involved because the world needs you."