

Class of 2020 Graduation celebration

4th March 2022

Graduate Speaker Dr Olivia Olujohungbe

Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests, friends, family, and fellow graduates. I am honoured to speak to you all today, on such an important day in our lives. Delivering a speech 9 months after graduation, another strain of coronavirus and 4-night shifts this week is not quite how I initially imagined my graduation day, but I can think of no other place I would rather be right now than celebrating with you all here.

We are in a somewhat unique position, having spent the last 8 months working in the NHS. So much has changed since we first put on our scrubs that I didn't quite know where to begin at first. But one thing I do know is that I would not be the person I am now without the experiences I have gained attending this University... and what a beautiful city to have done it in!

In my last year, I was lucky enough to become President of Artefacts, the Medical School's Performing Arts Society. It is one of the things in my life I am most proud of, especially raising over £3,000 for local charities through online events and showcases during lockdown. This speaks to one of the many great parts of studying here; The University doesn't just provide opportunities to develop outside of your academic life, it encourages it. First-year-me would never have dreamed that I would perform on stage at the O2 Academy, lift the cup at a Medics Hockey final, complete the Yorkshire Three Peaks, start the first Charity Bollywood night, work with the Anthony Walker Foundation to diversify the curriculum - and accidentally lock myself out of my house, half naked, an hour before my final clinical exam (hey, it's all about balance).

It would be impossible to reflect on the last six years with purely rose-tinted glasses. The last two years alone have brought significant and unprecedented change to our lives. We have all faced great challenges, sacrifices and at times, loss, on our journeys to reach this point. I hope that today provides an opportunity for us all to celebrate what we have achieved and that in your worst hours, you are reminded of the adversity you have not just faced, but overcome, to stand here now as a proud alumnus of the University of Liverpool.

There is so much more I could talk about, but instead I want to end with the main feeling I have right now: gratitude. I would like to personally thank staff at the School and across the trusts for their wisdom and guidance over the years. The healing power of a strong cup of tea, a biscuit and an encouraging word from a tutor is not to be underestimated. Thank you.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank our loved ones - in the audience and watching at home - for your relentless support. If it takes a village to raise a child, I'm not sure what you

need to make a doctor, but I know it's a lot of work. Friends, family, partners – you have all shaped the best parts of us in your own way.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my family. I remember calling my mum about 20 minutes after she dropped me off on my very first day, begging her to pick me up because I felt so overwhelmed. I'm not sure I said this at the time but mum – thanks for not coming to get me that day. I owe you one. My dad passed away when I was 15, but his determination, kindness and joy for life continues to inspire me to this day. I know that many people in the audience will have loved ones who are sadly no longer with us, but continue to guide us onwards. I would love if you could all join me in another round of applause, in appreciation for the loved ones both here and in our hearts.

And to you, my friends and now colleagues, some of whom were unable to attend today, working one of the many on-call shifts that are now so familiar to us. I may have learnt practical skills and clinical theory in lectures, but you have taught me grace, courage, compassion, and tenacity. You are the best part of university for me, and it has been a privilege to have navigated our first years of adulthood together. May I wish you all good luck in the next chapter of your lives - wherever, whatever and with whoever this may be. You deserve every success and happiness moving forward.

Really, I could keep speaking forever, which the patients of Tyne and Wear are sadly quickly learning. But there is beauty in brevity, so I will finish here by leaving you with this quote: "Courage does not always roar. Sometimes, courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day that says: "I will try again tomorrow." Thank you.