

TURIANO

It is a privilege to speak to my fellow Seton Hall Law Class of 2022 graduates, the administration, faculty, family, friends, and so many others celebrating this special day. When I think back to meeting everyone at orientation, I remember the questions that were buzzing around the room – which section are you in, what should I include in a case brief, who will our professors be, and what exactly is an outline? These questions were answered pretty quickly and all of us were off on our law school journeys. As we started our classes a new set of questions started to emerge – what do you think about the outcome of this case, what are the differences between the majority and the dissenting opinions, how would you have decided this case differently? It is through these questions that we started to learn not just from our incredible professors, but from each other. We made each other stronger advocates when we met as adversaries to argue motions in classes like Lawyering, Appellate Advocacy, or P&A. Hearing the strength of your opponent’s argument forced you to take a deeper look at your own and to think on your feet. We broadened each other’s perspectives by sharing our thoughts in class discussions and by offering a new take on a line of reasoning. Everyone came to law school with a unique background and unique goals for the future. Everyone sitting in our classes had a different set of motivations for why they were pursuing a law degree. And all of our learning experiences were enriched as a result.

But no one could have anticipated the question that all the graduates sitting here today would eventually have to ask themselves – how will I handle being a law student in the midst of a pandemic? We all knew coming here that law school was not going to be easy, but this question made our experience that much harder. Yet, it is the answers to that question, and the calls to action that make me so proud to be among the Class of 2022. This group of graduates pivoted, persevered, and prevailed.

We navigated remote class instruction, virtual internships, and at-home exams. We balanced the pressures of OCI while starting our spring semesters. We found new and creative ways to network and to organize events. These graduates know firsthand what it means to be flexible and proactive and this resilience will shape how we enter the profession as young lawyers.

When people ask me what makes law school so difficult – one of the reasons that I give is that you must always remain diligent. No matter what is going on outside of class, missing reading assignments or failing to stop and outline a difficult point from class will only cause more difficulty and anxiety in the long run. Yet, throughout our law school experience, we found ourselves faced with the balance between doing our studies and finding our voice in current events. Admittedly, at times it was extremely difficult to remain focused on our studies. But everyone sitting here today persevered and put in the work to gain the tools necessary to now go out as Seton Hall lawyers and to effect change. We studied the relationship between law and public policy and how decisions and certain legal principles contribute to systemic issues. We analyzed issues in historical context and traced their effects over time. We never stopped questioning how the law can be reformed to achieve more equitable results. These are the questions we asked as law students, and I am proud that in the future I will call my classmates judge, partner, Governor, Representative, GC, CEO, and leader – knowing that we will continue to ask these questions and to seek just solutions.

This experience of law school has changed us in many ways. Whether it is by making us feel compelled to explain an evidence error to our friends and family while watching a show or whether it is by knowing how to craft a persuasive argument in support of desired social change – we now think as lawyers, and I am confident that we can all take on any challenge or question presented.

Our professors instilled in us that preparation is one of the fundamental tools of effective lawyering – enter the cold call – perennial source of anxiety and something that kept everyone on their toes. In our classes the cold call quickly taught us the value of proper preparation. If you were prepared and knew a case well it was then that we could take our analysis to the next level, challenge that which we read, and respond to any question a professor might pose. When you hear your name called today – know that you are prepared to answer and walk with confidence because Class of 2022 – we did it!