

Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Charter Class Commencement Ceremony
June 3, 2006

Let me add my congratulations to the members of the Charter Class of the Skagg's School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. The program of study and training that you have completed was rigorous, challenging, and at the cutting edge of developments in your field. Pharmacy is undergoing remarkable change and experiencing great progress. Your education has prepared you to be not only an observer of the future but a leader in defining that future. You and your families can be very proud of what you have accomplished here at UCSD.

In July of 1956 I started my academic career as an Assistant Professor at Stanford University. So this summer I will be celebrating 50 years as a member of the academic community. Over that period of time I have participated in about 200 graduation ceremonies---which may be a world record. Each of those ceremonies was special in its own way. But I can assure you that this particular ceremony will always be at the forefront of my memory. This charter class graduation is the realization of the dreams of today's graduates, but it is also the realization of the dreams of the UCSD faculty who, from the beginnings of this university, were determined to establish a school of pharmacy.

Let me provide you with a brief history. UCSD's origins go back to the early 1900s with the establishment of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. In the 1950s, the Regents of the University of California recognized the need to expand the university system and decided to establish a general campus here in La Jolla. The faculty already in place at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography became the founding faculty of the new university and were responsible for recruiting additional faculty and formulating academic programs. The members of the Scripps faculty, with their interests in oceanography and geophysics, were truly brilliant physical scientists. When it came to establishing the university departments of mathematics, physics, and chemistry they understood the

disciplines and recruited outstanding individuals. Many of the recruits were already members of the National Academy of Sciences and several were Nobel Laureates.

However, when it came to establishing the biological and medical sciences, the founding faculty, being physical scientists, were on less secure ground. After much discussion and consultation with leading biological scientists around the world, they were persuaded to take the biological and medical sciences in an unconventional direction—namely, focusing on the newly emerging fields of molecular and cellular biology. At that time this approach was not in vogue elsewhere in the academic world. Nevertheless, the faculty was convinced that the future lay in that direction. And, of course, time has proven them right; the biological sciences and the medical school at UCSD have evolved as national leaders in research and education.

Part of the faculty's original plan was to establish a school of pharmacy in addition to a school of medicine—because they viewed pharmacology as central to the future of the medical sciences. I don't have time to recount the trials and tribulations involved in trying to establish such a school. Suffice it to say that one proposal after another was rejected, not on academic grounds but for other reasons. Finally, in the mid 1990s the stars in the heavens were properly aligned: (1) the biological sciences and the medical school at UCSD had become world renowned; (2) the San Diego biotech community—with UCSD playing a catalytic role—had become a national center for pharmaceutical research and development; (3) and to everyone's surprise, the National Academy of Sciences in 1994 ranked the pharmaceutical science program at UCSD as 3rd in the nation—which was remarkable, given that we still did not have a school of pharmacy.

When we recently dedicated the new pharmacy facilities here on campus, I gave credit to a number of individuals who played key roles in establishing this school. I don't have time to recount that list now, but once again I do want to acknowledge Palmer Taylor, your dean. From the very beginning he was a determined and effective advocate for the school. We would not be here today-- celebrating this graduation-- without his vision and dedication.

To conclude the story, Bob Dynes as the Chancellor of UCSD sent forward to the President's Office of the UC System a plan for a new school. It was a brilliant plan, and I can say without fear of being contradicted that no president could have received the plan with more enthusiasm than I did. In the Year 2000 the Regents of the University of California gave their official blessing to the establishment of the Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

So to the graduates, let me finally say, not only are you receiving your hoods and diplomas today, but you are also making history as the realization of a long standing dream.