

Dalhousie Dentistry
Class of 2025 Valedictorian Speech

Derek d'Eon
May 30, 2025

Good evening, Dean Ben Davis, Faculty, Staff, Friends, Family, and the Dalhousie Dentistry Class of 2025!

First of all, I would like to thank the grad dinner committee and the sponsors for making this evening possible. Let's give a big round of applause to Ibi, Gabby, Kam, Allie, Taylor, Taylor, Alex, Salma, and Sarah for all their hard work in organizing this event.

My name is Derek d'Eon and I have the privilege of standing here tonight as this year's valedictorian. When I found out I was chosen to be this year's valedictorian, I was a little hesitant to take the role. I knew I wasn't chosen for my public speaking skills, so I asked people why they thought I was chosen. My partner Chloe said, "it's because you're smart.", My mom said, "it's because you can do anything.", and my dad was just as confused as I was.

In reality, I think it's probably because of all those Canva summary notes I made over the years. For those of you who don't know what I'm talking about, I would make condensed summary sheets while studying for exams and I would share them with the class for anyone to use. So, I accept this position as your valedictorian as repayment for all those hours put into making those Canva notes.

I remember the first day of dental school like it was yesterday. I was so scared. I didn't know if I was made to be a dental student. I didn't know anything about teeth. I didn't floss every day. I didn't know if I would fit in. I faced my fears, and I showed up on that first day. I walked up to the first group of nervous, stressed-out, sweaty people and I asked, "Are you guys first-year dental students?" They replied, "No... we're 4th years." I thought to myself, "what did I get myself into!". I eventually found my classmates, who were just as nervous and sweaty, and together we all hopped on the 4-year rollercoaster known as dental school.

The very first week was great! Our orientation week was full of fun, getting to know each other, and no responsibilities. The rollercoaster was smooth sailing up to the peak, and then it quickly went downhill with a bunch of twists and loops for the next four years.

That first year, I remember we would walk over to the Tupper building for our anatomy course, and we would see Dr. Robertson carrying his bike over his shoulders up the stairs to the 14th floor anatomy lab. That guy is a beast! I don't know about the rest of you, but I took the elevator. We would then walk into the anatomy lab where Dr. Jaffar was eagerly waiting to do his demonstrations on cadavers. I will never forget where the vallecula is thanks to him. For those of you who don't know where the vallecula is, "obviously, it's the space where the chicken bone gets stuck!". Don't forget to like and subscribe to his YouTube channel!

Dr. Jaffar is not the only celebrity who taught us in first year. Dr. Seth, who appeared on the great Canadian baking show twice, also taught us in first year restorative in the sim lab. He must've had a lot of patience watching us struggle to place a rubber dam on perfectly positioned plastic teeth and then proceed to drill those teeth away to nothing as we were trying to figure out how to use a handpiece for the first time.

Remember we would wax up teeth in occlusion with Dr. Cleghorn? Most of us just had blobs on a stick until Bruce came and saved the day to help us turn our blobs into teeth. Those days were so fun because we would all go to the cavity for lunch together afterwards and talk about how bad we were at doing these things and we could all laugh about it because we were all going through the same struggles.

The following year, we welcomed seven QP and IMU students into our class. Many of them were already dentists in other countries, but they were all so nice and humble about it. It's hard to believe that they weren't here with us all four years because they fit in so well with the rest of the class during the last three years.

We also started working on each other that year, doing exams, taking x-rays, poking each other with needles. I was paired up with my good buddy Rylan. In hindsight, it was probably not a good idea to let us pick our own partners. I won't tell any stories of the things we did because Rylan and I still want to graduate tomorrow, but we had some good laughs.

We also started learning about dentures with Dr. Cook. She gave us our very first denture patients where we took roughly 12 appointments to complete their dentures. I remember referring back to Dr. Loney's videos so many times between those appointments. Dr. Loney, I have never met you in person before, but I just want you to know that you have saved more dentures than Fixodent.

Third year was the toughest year for me. It was the year where we started seeing our very own patients. We had to relearn everything we had forgotten over the past two years, including what Angela Pitman taught us about how to use axium. We also had to learn new things like how to manage patients, how to talk to patients, how to write chart notes, how to send referrals, how to work with the lab, and we still had so many other courses and exams on top of that.

We also started doing rotations that year. We did rotations in oral surgery, oral path, emerge, grad perio, north end, North Preston, and Harbourview. We did week-long rotations at both the VG and the IWK. I like to say that if you can survive those rotations, you can survive anything. I am not going to lie, many of those rotations turned into personal roast sessions when we didn't know how to answer their questions, but we have learned so much from them and we are forever grateful for that.

We also started learning about endodontics in third year with Dr. Mello. Those Wednesdays were long days. So many broken files. So many voids in the gutta percha. Thank God we had each other to lean on during those times because I was ready to quit dental school after obturating the same canal five times before I got it right.

In fourth year, we started to gain more confidence when treating patients. We were finally finishing ICE exams in one appointment and diagnosing and treatment planning on our own for the most part. We were starting to do more complex procedures like root canals and crowns. We finally got the hang of managing patients and navigating axium. Life was good, and then the Canadian Dental Care Plan came along and took all our requirements away from us! I think it's a good program, it just happened at a terrible time for us because it stalled all the treatments we had planned for our patients. Although we all thought we wouldn't graduate, we are still here today. We ended up supporting each other by sharing last-minute requirements and look where we are now!

Now that we are at the end of the rollercoaster, we can finally breathe and be proud of what we have accomplished. Would I hop on the rollercoaster again? I'm not sure. There were a lot of steep downhill rides both in real life and in my bank account. But in the end, I'm glad I made it through the whole ride, and I could not have done it without you guys. **Graduating from Dalhousie Dentistry is not an individual achievement.** There are so many people in this room that I cannot thank enough for getting me through dental school, especially my classmates. You guys mean the world to me, and I am forever grateful for being

a part of this amazing group of people. It's hard to believe that I didn't know any of you 4 years ago. Dental school has brought us so close together that it feels like we have known each other for decades!

We have learned a lot of things over the past 4 years:

- Ahmed and Parsa taught us that Spar scrubs are better than FIGS.
- Dr. Steeves taught us how to properly shred on the electric guitar.
- Dr. Hunter taught us that Star Wars costumes are not just for Halloween.
- Dr. Boran taught us that you are never too old to look good in Jordans.
- Rylan and Dr. Power taught us to not cheer for the Toronto Maple Leafs during the playoffs unless you want to be heartbroken.

Jokes aside, Dalhousie Dentistry has taught us far more than just how to do a filling or how to extract a tooth. It taught us resilience. It taught us time management. It taught us how to think critically. It taught us how to be professional. It taught us how to work together and respect each other.

Dalhousie Dentistry also has strength in diversity. I come from a very small town in rural Nova Scotia where everyone looks and sounds like me. Here, I met people from all over the world. Dalhousie Dentistry has many different cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds, and I have learned a lot of things from a lot of different people. And although we all come from different places, we are all united through dental school, which brought us so close to one another.

To our instructors: thank you for your patience, your guidance, and your constructive criticism. Thank you for steering us in the right direction when things would go south. Thank you for answering all our questions. There are too many of you to thank everyone individually, but I want you to know that we have learned so many things from each and every one of you.

To the administrative staff, dental assistants, dispensary staff, and every other person who keeps Dalhousie Dentistry afloat – I know not many of you are here today but thank you for helping us along every step of the way. Thank you for not laughing too hard when we would make obvious mistakes. Although you may have often been frustrated with us on the inside, you were always there to help us with a smile!

To our parents, grandparents, siblings, extended family and friends — You have supported us long before we ever picked up a handpiece. Thank you for believing in us even when we didn't believe in ourselves. Thank you for bragging about us to anyone who would listen. Thank you for being there for us and

supporting us every step of the way. Thank you for raising us into the professionals we are today. We are all here tonight not just because of what **WE** have accomplished, but because of everything **YOU** have done to get us here.

To my partner, Chloe – thank you for listening to me complain about random things that mean nothing to you. You have been by my side since high school and have always been my number 1 supporter.

To my classmates — As Dom would say,
“Heck yeah we frickin’ did it!”.

I hope, when you look back on these years, you don’t just remember the stress, the deadlines, or the late-night study marathons. I hope you remember the camping trips, the golf tournaments, the winter balls. I hope you remember the laughter in the sim lab, the inside jokes during lectures, and the feeling of going to class every day with 50 other people who truly ***get it***.

You are the most supportive, hilarious, and resilient group I’ve ever had the privilege of knowing. There is not another class in the entire world I would rather be graduating with than you guys. As we go off to different cities, provinces, and practices, remember that you’re never alone. You’ve got a whole class behind you.

So, take a deep breath. Be kind. Be brave. Be proud. You’re not just dentists — you’re ***Dentists from the Dalhousie Dentistry class of 2025***. And that means something!

Now let’s go drill into the world and hope there’s no pulp exposure.

Thank you.