

Valedictorian Speech 2022

Good evening, everyone,

On behalf of the dental hygiene class of 2022, I would like to welcome all faculty and classmates who are here tonight. It is a privilege and honor to be given this wonderful opportunity to be able to speak to all of you gathered here.

Well, here we are today after two long years of determination, persistence and sleepless nights. Two years of laughs, tears, and stress. Two years.... When you think about it, it doesn't really sound that long, does it? But so much can happen in the span of two years.

I remember the start of our program; it was like the first day of school all over again. Our stomachs were filled with butterflies and knots, but we all had the same desires and dreams in mind. We walked into the doors of Dalhousie as naïve as can be, not aware of what was to come, including the never-ending weeks of back-to-back midterms, quizzes, competencies and the countless group projects. Even despite our first year being online, we remained resilient and grew closer together as a family.

Some of the most notable memories include spending time with each other in our assigned lunchrooms and not to mention, taking impressions on each other for the first time and nearly making each other gag.

Looking back, it seems like it was just yesterday we took our first radiograph, probed and explored for the first time and of course we all remember our first clinic patient. Let's admit, that was pretty nerve wrecking.

And I know we were all grateful and can sympathize with each other for all the local anesthetic injections we went through, especially the palatal ones. Apologies for those who were stuck with me for the LA labs. You guys probably cursed me out afterwards.

Those first experiences led to second ones and eventually led to the accumulation of our clinical skills and capabilities.

But we couldn't have accomplished anything alone. We've had a lot of help along the way and there are several people who come to mind who got us through this program, and they all deserve recognition.

First, I'd like to give a sincere thanks to our dental hygiene faculty for shaping us into the best dental hygienists possible with their teaching and support. To the first-year dental hygiene professors, you held our hands, navigating us through the beginning of the program, slowly going through everything in order to build that strong foundation we needed. We went from the sweet roll, roll, roll and adapting the tip third of the instrument to having the bandage ripped off and before we knew it, we were in second year seeing patients all on our own.

Our second year in the clinic could not have been complete without our SGP leaders and instructors. You were constantly bending over backwards, giving us feedback, guidance and doing everything you could do to help us overcome and learn from our shortcomings. Even during the rough clinic blocks, when all we wanted was a 2 to get through, know that without your support, we as a class would have been lost in the clinic without you.

Next, I want to thank our amazing family and friends who were there for us in so many ways. From being our buddy patients when we were learning our skills, even if that meant coming back for multiple appointments and having to be in a dental chair for what felt like the longest time ever, to providing constant support and motivation throughout this two-year journey, we appreciate everything you have done for us and can't thank you enough. We're sorry for constantly yelling at you to brush softer and to floss better.

Finally, I want to express sincere gratitude to my classmates. We should thank ourselves because we lived through all the highs and lows, tears and laughs. Seriously, just think about some of the challenging times we went through the last two years, like giving injections for the first time, having our patients cancel on us at the last minute, and not knowing if we would finish our clinical requirements in time. But despite all this, we persevered and still found time to laugh and have fun. We started off as mere strangers but each semester as we got to know each other, we grew a little bit closer. The last two years spent with all of you were unforgettable.

Saying goodbye is both exciting and emotional because this is one of the last times we'll be seeing each other before we embark on our journeys. We won't be able to walk into the Cavity and talk about our days or spend time chatting in room 1200 anymore, but we will walk away with a collection of memories.

And we can't forget about the snacks that were waiting for us in perio class. It was exactly the pick-me-up we all needed after a long day of class. Thanks Professor MacDonald.

As I look around this room, I acknowledge that each one of us has played a role in helping one another reach the same goal. Words cannot describe how thankful I am for the friendships that have grown between us.

Now whether we want to admit it or not, the reality is, we have so much more to learn after graduation. I know personally there will be times when I'll be wishing I had some eyes peering over my shoulder looking for that wrist motion or to double check what I've done. But I know that we can push ourselves beyond any boundary and stay true to our goals.

As we move forward, remember to give yourself permission to feel vulnerable. Allow yourself to feel afraid. It's okay to be scared of the uncertainties that lie ahead. But don't forget to let yourself bask in the joy of moving forward. Hold onto your anchor.

I would like to close by sharing something that I try to stick by to, which is that "the most selfless thing you can do in your life is to live your life in service to others."

To my fellow peers, I thank you for your commitment to becoming registered dental hygienists and to living a life in service to others to help promote, educate, and advocate for oral health and preventative dentistry.

Tomorrow we will walk across the stage and become graduates of Dalhousie dental hygiene. No matter where life may take us, I wish the absolute best for each and every one of you. I know that all of you will continue to shine bright into the future.

Congratulations to the dental hygiene class of 2022

Thank you