Hello. I’m Dr. Monica Lounsbery, Dean of the College of Health and Human Services. It is my distinct honor to extend our most sincere and hearty congratulations to you – class of 2020! While extending congratulations and holding celebrations virtually is anticlimactic be assured that the university will hold our traditional commencement ceremonies when is safe to do so. These plans will be announced soon. In the meantime, I’d like to offer some things I’ve been thinking about the Class of 2020.

I think this graduating class reflects a special group of people who have completed Health and Human Services degree programs in a very unique time in our history. I think this class, the classes recently graduated, and our current students are the greatest generation 2.0 in the making. I have good reason to think this.

Over the course of the past few years, I’ve had a chance to meet several CHHS students. What I have learned is that our students are diverse and diversity is truly one of their and our many strengths. Our students know what diversity means, they respect multiple perspectives, they listen, seek to understand, and validate individual truths. This has resulted in courageous conversations and transformation to applied understanding that no doubt will advance civic and public life for us all.
The COVID-19 global pandemic has resulted in substantial global loss of life, disrupted everyday living for everyone and this occurred on top of some of the greatest health and human services challenges of our history, including record numbers of people experiencing housing instability, food insecurity, and poverty. Additionally, our country has been riddled with gun violence, hate crimes, and very serious political, social, environmental, economical, and technological challenges.

Many of our students came to the university seeking a higher education to secure increased financial outlook and stability but equal in importance to so many CHHS students is the desire to give back, contribute to meaningful change, and have a positive impact on the lives of others. Let me tell you about some of our students.

**Josh Haber** is a community health major. Josh developed PeriDeal, a mobile app to combat food insecurity and support an affordable balanced diet. He and his team won the CSULB Innovation Challenge and now he has seed funding to scale his project. We asked Josh, what was the most important thing you learned during your time at CSULB. He told us, “My time at CSULB really taught me that life is less about what happens to you and more about how you react to it. It's incredibly empowering to recognize what you have control over and to disregard everything else.”

We asked some of our students why they chose to major in a degree field in CHHS.
Celeste Gonzalez, a Speech Language Pathology Major, told us, “I choose my career path in Speech-language pathology because I want to help people communicate in ways that are not just verbal. Communication is a huge key in creating relationships and everyone deserves a chance to create a relationship even if their verbal output isn’t the same as someone else’s.

Tommy Mang, a Criminology/Criminal Justice major, told us, “The most important thing that I learned during my time at CSULB is, anything is possible if you put in work. I learned how to be a leader, and how to work with others who come from a different background.”

None of us did this alone. We had each other and our families and friends who love us. We worked hard. We sacrificed, learned, and achieved. We failed but we never gave up. We endured disappointment, loss, self-doubt and instability. Found answers to problems, challenged the status quo, stood up for things we believe in – all because we had courage and we persevered.

With the challenges we are all facing right now, and nature and talent of our BEACH students, I contend that this is the making of the Greatest Generation 2.0. In parting, I offer this simple sentiment to you – Our World has Never Needed Long Beach State Graduates More. Go Beach!