

## **Dean Lounsbery – Graduation Speech**

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 2021!

I think this graduating class reflects a very special group of people. You have completed Health and Human Services degrees in one of the most critical times in our nation's history. COVID-19 has disrupted all of our lives. It has led to an enormous loss of life, transformed our healthcare system, and has left us all with extreme Zoom fatigue.

And this pandemic happened on top of some of the greatest challenges in health and human services including social injustice, racism, mental health issues, political polarization, economic instability, and distrust in the systems and institutions we have always known—just to name a few. But despite all of this, I'm optimistic.

I'm optimistic because our future is in the hands of this graduating class. It's your time. It's a challenging time, but I know that you are up to the task. Our degree programs have prepared you to take on these critical challenges.

So, why am I so optimistic? Let me tell you about our college and these amazing graduates.

Did you know that the entire college and many of our graduates today stood up to racism and took action on our campus and beyond? We understand that this work must continue now and into the foreseeable future.

Did you know that the Department of Health Science worked with the City of Long Beach to advance Black Health Equity and that some of our graduates today have been instrumental in this effort?

In addition, faculty and graduates from Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Emergency Management, Health Care Administration, Kinesiology, Public Policy and Administration, and Social Work developed plans and took action to dismantle structural racism in healthcare, prisons, policing, schools, and government.

Faculty and graduates from Family and Consumer Sciences and Recreation and Leisure Studies made efforts to address diversity, inclusion, and equity in many industries including hospitality and tourism.

These changes big and small make a difference and they help shape a better, more just, and equitable world.

Throughout the pandemic, CHHS provided essential services.

Did you know that PT@The Beach has remained open, and our Physical Therapy students saw hundreds of patients?

And the Speech and Language Clinic was one of the first in the region to transition to teletherapy. These free online services have been a lifeline for people with communication disorders.

Did you know that our students recognized the need for broadened mental health support? And because of them, we worked with campus and community organizations to create the Beach Buddy Peer Mentoring Program, a new way for students to support one another. All colleges at CSULB are now exploring ways to implement Beach Buddies.

CHHS and our graduates recognize problems, and we respond.

I'll give you another example. Remember when there was a PPE shortage? CHHS students, faculty, and staff volunteered to repair N95 masks for essential workers.

Our Fashion Design and Merchandising students pitched in by designing and distributing masks. Who knew masks could be so fashionable?

And perhaps one of the most salient reasons I'm optimistic is because our CHHS graduates across all our Schools and Departments have played a critical role in the fight against coronavirus.

Long Beach has been publicly recognized for its response to COVID-19. The city could not have done it without your efforts.

Over 200 of our Nursing faculty, staff, and students worked on the frontline throughout the pandemic and courageously volunteered to provide vaccinations — while continuing to provide care for all other health needs.

There are countless stories from this graduating class that inspire hope. Be optimistic with me.

In closing, let's look to our history. The people who grew up during the Great Depression and World War II were called the Greatest Generation. They rose to the challenge of their time to usher in a new era of innovation and prosperity.

This time is no different. You are the "greatest generation 2.0" in the making. You are needed and the stakes are high. No pressure. But you are ready. You received a world-class education from a world-class faculty.

The College of Health and Human Services is about people and helping them to live happier, healthier, and safer lives. And we are up to the challenge.

No action is too small. No barriers, ever. Go Beach.

