

To the Schulich Medicine Class of 2020,

Welcome all to what is unquestionably the largest gathering of people I've been a part of in some time, and to convocation during the time of coronavirus: it's not convocation and this is not a valedictorian speech. We're collectively a little confused about it, but I'm excited to be here with you all the same. I know in light of the present circumstances some of you have already made the move across the province and in some instances across the country, and I'm grateful that although strange and unprecedented, we have the opportunity and the means to gather in this way as a class. While this is certainly not the event we had anticipated attending on May 22nd, this *is* a beautiful opportunity to reflect on what has defined us as a class, what legacy we will leave behind, and where we will go next. Tonight, I will withhold most of my graduation sentiments, and instead say a few words in celebration of our class.

In the process of preparing this address, I tasked you all with the challenge of providing one word to describe the class of 2020. Repeated more often than any other word, was *family*. It's about as cliché as it gets, but in this case it's actually true. From our first official gathering together in a very poorly climate-controlled lecture hall in September of 2016 to our unanticipated and foreboding final gathering on Friday March 13th of this year - yes that's right, Friday the 13th-, the class of 2020 has been a – well – dysfunctional, but solid family. Each of us is informed by a unique background and set of perspectives, but what brings us together and stands out to me as an overarching and unifying theme within our class is our supportive, inclusive, and resilient nature. When faced with the inherent challenges of medical school - as well as the unforeseen, such as the times we find ourselves in now – the class of 2020 has consistently united not only to lean on each other but also to devise creative solutions. Whether you were the type to reach out to an individual friend, connect with a group of your likeminded classmates, or speak loudly and moistly before the class, there was always a means through which you could be seen, heard, and supported as a member of this family.

Undeniably, we have left a legacy in the hearts of our classmates and friends. And so too have we left a legacy at Schulich. The class of 2020 has had an outstanding impact at Schulich as well as in the local and global communities. I'm filled with great pride as I reflect on the many accomplishments made by members of our class, and I'd like to name a few of them, though by no means is this an exhaustive list. To begin, several members of our class put forth a motion that was passed by London City Council to include naloxone kits in city-operated facilities in London. Another group of students partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association to implement a peer support workshop at Schulich. Several of our classmates have done extensive global health work in areas such as mental health awareness and HIV education. Others have worked with Global MINDS to tackle challenges faced by Londoners when accessing mental health services. Each year, an exceptional group of student leaders has worked to put on a Tachycardia production, and as a class we have helped to raise thousands of dollars for the Regional HIV and Aids Connection. Members of our class have founded mentorship programs and interest groups, collaborated with faculty leaders to advance medical education, and even devoted countless volunteer hours to COVID relief efforts. The list goes on and on, and the impact of these initiatives will be felt by affected communities for years to come.

Presently, we find ourselves in strange circumstances. I would be remiss not to mention this as we gather in our formal attire over Zoom and as many clinicians who have joined us this evening continue to provide essential care to their patients. Now more so than ever, I find myself reflecting on the

significance of time. How quickly our four years together as a class seems to have gone by. Four years of discovery, memories, mistakes and hardships, triumphs, and countless stories to be continued. Four years: a period of time that seems – for reasons that escape me - to be the universally agreed upon interval of time during which adequate personal and professional growth is supposed to have occurred. What *is* it about this arbitrary interval of time that leads people in positions of authority to say, ‘yep, those folks are definitely prepared!’? After four years of childhood, we were ready to nap in front of others and do crafts in exchange for marks. After four years of highschool, we were ready to graduate from adjunct classrooms known fondly as ‘portables’ and wander into intimidating lecture halls of more than five hundred people. And after four years of an undergraduate education - perhaps with a master’s degree, PhD, or professional training to lay claim to - we were all deemed ready to embark upon the privileged journey of acquiring a medical degree. Of course, little did we know we were really just going back to highschool. Honestly, I know more about each of you than I’d like to, we had our own computer lab, we invested extraordinary amounts of time and energy into creating a musical theater production, we had two class bands, played sports when we should have been studying, and spent the majority of the last four years deciding what to do with our lives!

After four years of medicine at Schulich, you may be asking yourself: am I ready to venture forth into the next phase of my training? Whether you are remaining at Schulich or beginning your residency, I would like to suggest that, arbitrary or not, our four years here have prepared us for great things. To this end, we owe a great deal to everyone in UME, to those at the LEW Office, and to faculty and interdisciplinary team members at Schulich’s clinical affiliates. To those of you who are in attendance tonight and to the many who are not but who have helped to shape our careers to this point, we thank you for your mentorship, education, and support: you consistently created an educational space in which we felt welcome, were valued, and found ourselves able to flourish as individuals and professionals. Perhaps most importantly, however, Schulich presented us all with the opportunity to meet and grow alongside a collection of driven, compassionate, and inspiring classmates. I feel strongly that what enables us all to take this next step in our individual journeys is in large part the relationships we’ve formed and the perspectives we’ve shared with each other. One thing I know for sure is the class of 2020 will not be measured by four years but rather by a lifetime of collaboration, gratitude, and friendship.

Thank you to our convocation coordinators Michelle and Kat, to Pam Bere of the LEW Office and our Grand Marshall Dr. Charys Martin for all of their hard work in bringing this celebration together, as well as Judith, Rebecca, and Sasha for their passion and perseverance in bringing this celebration to fruition despite all of the challenges that coronavirus has presented. An additional thank you to all of the staff and faculty at Schulich who are in attendance tonight despite the uncertain circumstances you presently face. Thank you everyone. Congratulations, and stay safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lily Robinson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lily Robinson
Schulich Medicine Class of 2020 Valedictorian