



Rocky Vista University
Montana College of Osteopathic Medicine
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Rocky Vista University – Colorado Celebrates Class of 2022 Graduates

(Parker, CO) On Friday, May 20, Rocky Vista University (RVU) celebrated the graduation of 158 students from its College of Osteopathic Medicine (RVUCOM) program, as well as 37 students from its Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences (MSBS) program.

The ceremony, which took place at the Buell Theater in Denver, Colorado, began with the Posting of the Colors followed by the National Anthem, performed by Madison Propp, a first-year medical student.

The commencement ceremonies for each program marked the first in-person ceremony for graduates since 2019. The RVUCOM ceremony kicked off with a welcome address from RVU President, CEO, and Provost David A. Forstein, DO, FACOOG. Karen Nichols, DO, MA, current chair of the Board of Directors of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education and former Dean of Midwestern University/Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine, was given an honorary degree from Rocky Vista University by Dr. Forstein and Dr. Ferrill. Afterwards, Dr. Nichols delivered the keynote address, which was centered around the importance of communication, empathy, and sincerity: "You have come through one of the most stressful situations, and you have come out the other side. You will be better prepared to take care of your patients because of the stressful situations you had to deal with," said Dr. Nichols. She went on to say, "patients don't care what you know, until they know that you care."

After Heather Ferrill, DO, MS, MEdL, Dean of RVUCOM, delivered the Dean's Charge, the students were hooded, a moment in which a "hood" is placed over the heads of the graduate, marking their designation as a holder of a doctorate degree. For many students, a loved one or mentor accompanied them onstage in order to hood them.

A Commissioning Ceremony was also held to recognize the ranking of 14 graduates from the Military Medicine Program, one of RVU's specialty programs. This ceremony was conducted by Anthony J. LaPorta, MD, FACS, FACOS, COL. (Retired) US Army, Director of the Military Medicine Program and Professor of Clinical Surgery.

During the MSBS program's ceremony, Program Director Francina Towne, PhD, delivered welcoming remarks, and reminded the graduates not to underestimate the weight of their accomplishment: "I am mindful of what it is that we are doing here today, the power, meaning, and significance of this event in your journey," she said. "People often say that the point of a preparatory Master's program... is [to be] a stepping stone to something more. While this might be true, I want to make sure that you don't overlook the importance of this step, the value of what you've accomplished, and the pride you're feeling in this moment."

Helena Heister, MA, Student Body President of MSBS-CO Class of 2022, gave the student keynote speech, where she relayed the work it took for the graduates to earn their degrees: "Just 9 months ago, we walked into the classroom as strangers," Heister said. "Now, after countless hours in that classroom, in the library, between late nights and early mornings, we probably know each other a little too well." She went on to remind the graduates they were not there by mistake, and that, after all of their hard work, they "were meant to be there."

This was followed by the keynote speech, delivered by Hannah Puentes, DO '21, MSBS '17—a graduate of RVUCOM and a graduate of the RVU MSBS Program—who conferred upon the graduates the importance both of the achievement, and of keeping cool under pressure: "Think about what you're going to say, especially when you're feeling pressured," Dr. Puentes said. "Look around and realize you might not be the only one feeling the pressure. Ask yourself if there's anything you can say to lighten someone's load in that moment, and I can promise you that your load will feel much lighter."

Students graduating from the medical school will move on to residency programs across the U.S. for between 3-7 years. Many of the MSBS graduates will continue their education by attending professional programs — with 33 matriculating into RVUCOM-CO this fall.

RVU congratulates all graduates on their accomplishment and wishes them well as they begin the next chapter in their chosen field.