



President Barbara K. Mistick's Remarks

Wilson College 143rd Commencement Ceremony

May 19, 2013

President's Welcome

As president of Wilson College, it is my pleasure to join in welcoming you to our 2013 commencement activities. I'm pleased to welcome students, families, trustees, alumnae/i, faculty, administrators, staff and friends to the 143rd commencement ceremonies at Wilson College. I also extend greetings on behalf of our faculty, administrators and staff to our graduates, whom we have watched grow in confidence and academic achievement.

We've gathered together today to celebrate the achievements of our graduating students, the class of 2013, and express our congratulations on all of your hard work, as well as our heartfelt wishes for a happy and bright future for each of you. We are all so proud of you!

We've also come together today, with the greater Wilson community as witness, to thank and honor individuals who have made their mark on Wilson and to award the designation of trustee emerita. We are grateful for your service and indebted to you for your gift of your time, talent and dedication on behalf of Wilson College.

As your president, I feel privileged to be part of the Wilson commencement traditions that have existed for more than 140 years. This moment is the culmination of the collective efforts of many people who labor daily for the important values of a liberal arts education – one that fosters a commitment to critical thinking, problem solving and communicating effectively. We know this liberal arts foundation that you and your families have invested in at Wilson College is the best preparation for a life of work and service in your chosen field of study and scholarship.

Graduates, I've watched you over the past few years – how hard you've worked, how much you've cared, how confident you've become – and I'm proud of you. As you prepare to leave the supportive atmosphere of Wilson College and the teachers and friends who have nurtured you for the past four years, I know that you are ready. Wilson has prepared you well for a life of accomplishment, honor and service as citizens of the world. Know that you can do anything you set your mind to. After all, you're a Wilson graduate. And today is *your* day.

This past year has been an experience that has reminded each of us of the strength of the Wilson College community. We have proven together that Wilson College is a resilient and strong institution. You, too, are resilient and adaptive – skills you have honed during your time at Wilson that will serve you well, whether it's in your personal relationships or professional endeavors. You join with generations of Wilson alumnae and alumni to protect our planet and give us hope for the future.



I would also like to thank those without whom this day would not be possible, beginning with the Wilson faculty. Please stand to be recognized. You demand a lot from your students but you, in turn, give so much of yourselves to challenge them and prepare them for a life of exploration, achievement and lifelong learning. In the atmosphere of a small college like Wilson, you have a special bond with students that, in many cases, lasts a lifetime. You inspire us all. Thank you.

I would ask that we acknowledge one faculty member who is retiring this year. Would Dr. William Shoemaker, director of the Master of Education program, please stand so that all who have benefited from your guidance can thank you?

I also want to recognize our administrators and staff. Often your efforts go unrecognized and yet, if not for you, Wilson College would not be the same warm and nurturing place. You support us all in the business of the College. You go above and beyond for our students. Many of you work alongside work-study students, getting to know them personally and supporting them in ways we never hear about. We appreciate your dedication.

Now let's recognize our outstanding Trustees. I would ask that we especially acknowledge and thank two Trustees retiring from our Board of Trustees this year. Would you please stand as I announce your names so we can thank you? Nancy Kostas, Class of 1964, who is retiring from her service as an alumnae trustee, and Jane Everhart Murray, Class of 1967, who has served our Board of Trustees for over 15 cumulative years. I am amazed by the dedication of our Trustees and alumnae/I, and their unwavering dedication and powerful connection to this place, their willingness to give what is asked of you and much more. We thank you for your leadership and generosity, and for being here to share in this joyous day.

As our Class of 2013 graduates today, each of you enters the expanded Wilson alumnae/i community, represented here today through alumnae/i participating in the Blue and Silver Line – they serve as a reminder of the more than 8,000 Wilson alumnae/i who came before you. Today's Blue and Silver Line has representation from every class since 1948. The Class of 1948 is represented today by Denise Foreman. In just a few weeks our alumnae/i will gather for Reunion Weekend, where alumnae from as far away as Hawaii, California, Oregon, Texas and Minnesota and from classes 1947 to 2012 will come together to renew bonds of friendship forged here at Wilson College. Turn to those who preceded you for guidance, encouragement and support.

Finally, in keeping with tradition – and with apologies to all evens in the audience – I can say with confidence that today, Odds rule! Congratulations, Class of 2013!

Conferring of honorary degree of doctor of science

We shall now proceed with the conferring of the honorary degree of doctor of science and the introduction of our commencement speaker.

As we began the process of choosing a commencement speaker for this year, one woman who shares Wilson's deep commitment to scientific discovery, protection of our planet's environment and resources, and the critical importance of education, emerged: Sylvia Earle was the overwhelming choice of the senior class, for whom she has proven to be a role model and a hero.



Dr. Earle is an internationally recognized oceanographer, explorer, environmentalist, author and lecturer. A leading proponent of protecting the earth's environment and resources, Dr. Earle has been called "a living legend" by the Library of Congress and "her deepness" by the New Yorker and the New York Times. Time magazine named her its first "hero for the planet."

A former chief scientist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, Dr. Earle is the national geographic society's "explorer-in-residence" and has led more than 100 expeditions as an oceanographer and explorer. She's logged more than 7,000 hours underwater and led the first team of women aquanauts during the Tektite project in 1970.

Founder of Deep Ocean Exploration and Research Inc. and Mission Blue (the SEAlliance), Dr. Earle's current work focuses on developing a global network of areas, both on land and in the ocean, called "hope spots" that have the potential to, as she describes it, "safeguard the living systems that provide the underpinnings of global processes, from maintaining biodiversity and yielding basic life support services, to providing stability and resiliency in response to accelerating climate change."

Dr. Earle has a bachelor's degree from Florida State University and a master's degree and doctorate from Duke University. She has authored more than 180 scientific, technical and popular publications; lectured in more than 70 countries; and appeared in hundreds of television and radio productions. She holds 22 honorary doctorates and has received more than 100 national and international awards.

Please join me in welcoming a hero for our planet, Sylvia Earle.

