



## COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS, 2012 DEAN DENNIS S. CHARNEY, MD

MOUNT SINAI  
SCHOOL OF  
MEDICINE

### Mount Sinai: Challenging the Boundaries of Medicine

Welcome to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Commencement of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

Family members, Trustees, Faculty, Alumni and Honored Guests, sitting before you are the class of 2012 graduates of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, who are among the most distinguished graduates of any medical and graduate school in the world.

- Today, we celebrate their accomplishments in the classroom, the community, and the research laboratory, and their willingness to stand up for an Ideal – to innovate, to discover, and to deliver the best available medical care to all citizens of our nation and around the world.

- It is the quality of their Imagination that raises our sights, to do what's right, and not be satisfied by the status quo.

And, as we all know, our graduates did not get to this moment of high achievement by themselves.

Let's have a moment of silence to think about the loved ones who supported them during the long journey to this day, and to thank those who could not be with us today.

Class of 2012 – Please show your appreciation, with thunderous applause, for friends and family who are here with us today.

As much as Commencement is a time for our graduates to reflect and look ahead, it is also a time for Mount Sinai to reflect on what we are and what we can be.

For Academic Medical Schools, these are challenging times.

- We are expected to provide the highest-quality care at increasingly lower costs,
- The competition for scarce research funding has never, in the history of the National Institutes of Health, been more fierce,
- And there is far too little financial support for medical and graduate education.

Yet, despite all this, Mount Sinai School of Medicine is flourishing. Why is this?

Bob Dylan sang in "*Forever Young*": "May you have a strong foundation when the winds of changes shift."

To survive and thrive during tough times, you need a set of core beliefs, a moral compass that very few things can shatter.

Mount Sinai will never sacrifice its Mission of Great Medical Care, Therapeutic Discovery, Service to Society, and Innovation in Education.

Mount Sinai, since the founding of the Hospital in 1852, and the Medical School in 1963, has steadfastly stood for providing outstanding care for those in need during times of hardship.

Mount Sinai has cared for the wounds of war on the battlefield and the homefront since the Civil War.

On that fateful day 9/11/2001, when the twin towers fell, Mount Sinai was the **first** to care for the **first** responders. We continue to provide care to over 20,000 of these heroes.

More recently, on January 12, 2010, when a 7.0-magnitude earthquake rocked the impoverished nation of Haiti,

- Mount Sinai **immediately** mobilized a team of 27 health professionals who went to Haiti to help setup an emergency tent hospital.
- And over the following year, multidisciplinary teams made 5 additional trips to provide continued care for the Haitian people and training for their medical staff.

Closer to home, since the year 2000, the East Harlem Health Outreach Partnership, Mount Sinai's student-run clinic, has provided high-quality healthcare to our neighbors regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. It is a role model for the nation.

Now this year, the Mount Sinai School of Medicine is establishing a new academic department, the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, whose mission includes improving access to high quality, primary care to medically underserved communities, conducting health services research, and formulating national policy for primary care and mental health care delivery to the poor.

In short, wherever there is a patient in need...

- whether in our local community or anywhere in the world
- look for Mount Sinai –

#### WE'LL BE THERE.

Discovery and Innovation is encoded in the DNA of Mount Sinai.

- The halls of Mount Sinai School of Medicine are lined with the portraits of pioneers.
- More diseases and clinical syndromes have been named after Mount Sinai physicians than those at any other medical center in the country.
- Mount Sinai surgeons have a long history of developing and perfecting new procedures and devices that save thousands of lives.
- Our physicians and scientists are known for discovering drugs that cure disease, and developing vaccines that prevent disease.
- Through advances in genomics, systems biology, and bioinformatics Mount Sinai will be at the forefront of a revolution in personalized and precision medicine.

During the fall of 2008 we were faced with a major decision and a dilemma. The economy was entering a deep recession and most academic medical centers had cancelled major building projects. We ultimately committed to building what is now **The Leon and Norma Hess Center for Science and Medicine**, a spectacular 550,000 square foot research building which will open in the fall of 2012.

Thus, world class scientists and physicians are being drawn to Mount Sinai to make discoveries that will change the Practice of Medicine.

#### At Mount Sinai: We Challenge the Boundaries of Science and Medicine.

The lifeblood of any medical school is the quality of its students.

The graduates of the class of 2012 represent the Best and the Brightest.

The Best in their commitment to Human Rights and Social Justice. Our students won the 2012 Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society Project leadership Award for our Human Rights and Social Justice Scholars Program.

In 2012 alone over 40 of our students went on service missions to 16 countries.

The Brightest in that our graduate students have published landmark papers in areas as diverse as stem cell biology, cancer, and learning and memory. Our medical students have won prestigious research fellowships and conducted clinical research that is already impacting patient care.

Class of 2012 – I leave you with the following thoughts.

Great deeds in life are born from moments of Great Opportunity. Do not let these moments pass through your hands.

Stand shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, and heart to heart with those who have come before you – your loved ones, your mentors, and the Giants of Mount Sinai. Promise to carry on with their strength, fire, and aspirations to turn Hope into Reality.

Light a spark that becomes a guiding light, a ray of hope in the darkest night.

When you see wrong, make it right!

When you see sickness, cure it!

Be dreamers, who make others' dreams come true!

Your time begins now!