



GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY

THE MERCY UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

Cynthia Lynn Shymanski '20 GCU Commencement Remarks October 17, 2020

Dear President Marbach, Provost Warner, Family, Friends, and Faculty Members—including all of those in attendance and those watching virtually—good morning and welcome to the Graduate Commencement Ceremony for the Class of 2020. Today marks the end of a long chapter in the book of life. But, as we all know, where one chapter ends, a new one begins. We graduates have each reached the part of our own novel where the countless hours spent working toward our degree are now part of our past, and the hopes of a rewarding and prosperous future very quickly begin the next chapter. Thank you for supporting us along the way, and thank you for being here to celebrate with us this morning.

To the Georgian Court Graduate Class of 2020, I ask, what do we do now?

Now that we have completed the requirements for our degrees, what is the next step in life to get us to the fulfilling, rewarding places that we have always dreamed we would reach once we finished our degrees? The whole process begins with something that we all do every day, all day long. It begins with making decisions. Not only decisions, but smart, calculated decisions. While decision-making seems like such a basic, and elementary place to start, it is required as you plan the beginning of your future. People make decisions every day. Some are well-thought-out, and some are not. Some take

others' feelings and being into account, and some do not. Some have consequences, and some do not. Making decisions now becomes an important part of not only your professional choices, but your personal decisions in life as well.

We all began this part of our journeys by making a decision that would impact the rest of our lives. That decision was choosing Georgian Court University as the place to pursue graduate study. We may or may not have realized at the time of that decision the impact this institution would have on all of us. During our time here, GCU has encouraged us to think and has provided its students great educational, cultural, and life experiences that will impact us for the rest of our days. And there is a high probability that the impact felt here will not only be experienced by an individual who attended this school but will be also be felt by any person that we interact with. The tradition of the Sisters of Mercy continues to maintain its place embracing education, health care, and pastoral and social services. As graduates of this fine institution, we must always bear in mind the core values of this institution: respect, integrity, justice, compassion, and service. These moral and ethical principles have helped to shape us as we move forward into the next part of our careers and lives. As we begin our professional career paths, we should always be mindful of the choices we make. Some choices will be more difficult to make than others. But always remember, each choice will affect at least one other individual, if not more than one. Understand that your choices should reflect who you are, and your own values and moral principles. Compete with no one other than yourself so that you can make a better you. Strive to make decisions that will leave this world a better place because you were in it. We have all been given the opportunity to make great things happen. By making methodical, calculated decisions that reinforce our core values, we will never miss that opportunity to shine.

We graduates—parents, caretakers, educational leaders, scientists, artists, psychologists, holistic health providers, businesspeople—should decide to hold ourselves to the highest standards. Let's hold on steadfast to these ideals and pass them on to the next generation. This decision is essential as we continue to grow and to make our community a better place. We now become the role models whom younger

generations will emulate and look to for advice and guidance. Embrace the opportunity to mentor them. We have been given the gift of education and should share our knowledge and experiences with others each day. It will empower and elevate them, and give them a purpose in moving forward, producing quality outcomes, no matter what the actual goal is. We need to continue making good decisions that will have a positive impact on the individuals in our society.

On behalf of the graduating class, I would like to thank our families and friends for the love and support they have shown us as we pursued our goal and worked toward academic success. To our professors, thank you for all of the time, energy, and instruction given to each and every one of us during our time here with you. We would also like to remember our loved ones who have been taken from us too soon and are with us today in spirit.

To conclude this speech, I have a few thoughts for my fellow graduates. Be yourself; believe in yourself; be determined; inspire others; be kind; be thankful; and always challenge yourself. Take risks. As Kemmy Nola once said, "by leaving behind your old self and taking a leap of faith into the unknown, you find out what you are truly capable of becoming." Congratulations on this accomplishment, and best of luck to you all!