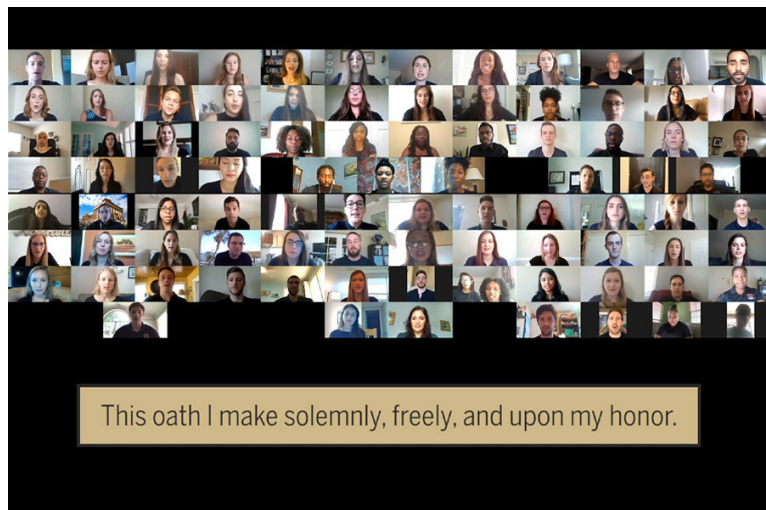


## FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY NEWS

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# College of Medicine celebrates virtual graduation for Class of 2020

 BY: **DOUG CARLSON** | PUBLISHED: **MAY 18, 2020** | 5:47 PM | SHARE:  


Graduating students from the Florida State University College of Medicine Class of 2020 take the Hippocratic Oath during a virtual ceremony. (College of Medicine)

One-hundred fifteen new physicians from Florida State University are a step closer to joining hospitals across the country eager for new recruits in a battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

How much they'll help in the early stages of residency training will vary from place to place, but clearly the transition from medical student to hands-on physician has taken on a new significance in 2020.

FSU's 16th class of M.D. students graduated Saturday in a virtual ceremony, an emotional milestone even though participants were isolated from each other and from faculty and mentors because of social distancing requirements. The ceremony also included 11 students receiving a Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences degree through FSU's Bridge to Clinical Medicine program. Those students are now part of the Class of 2024, scheduled to begin medical school at Florida State next week.

Instead of being hooded by faculty physicians, the graduating doctors were given an opportunity to share a video of themselves being hooded by a family member (for a few, their own child), friend or — in some cases — the dean of the regional campus where they spent their third and fourth years of medical school.

Those videos, along with a video in which dozens of students recited the Hippocratic Oath, became the star of the show. There were touching scenes of parents hooding their child-turned-physician and embracing in a moment that did not need to be live and onstage at Ruby Diamond Concert Hall — where the medical school's commencement ceremonies normally take place — to convey the feelings being shared. If those parents weren't a little teary-eyed at the time the video was recorded, there's a good chance they were upon seeing their child's name called for their walk across the virtual stage.

Parents and other family members and friends usually are not permitted to be part of the hooding ceremony, unless one of them happens to already be a physician or member of the FSU faculty, so the virtual graduation offered them a unique opportunity.

"Another benefit of a virtual graduation is being able to include a lot more family and friends than who would have actually been able to travel to Tallahassee," said graduating student Eric Walker from his apartment near the College of Medicine's Orlando campus.

On Friday, a day when graduating students normally would be in Tallahassee reuniting with classmates and participating in commencement event, Walker instead was driving to Miami to move into a new apartment in preparation for the start of his residency training in family medicine at Jackson Memorial Hospital.

He experienced graduation from his laptop computer, connecting with family members and friends using social media and receiving virtual hugs instead of real ones.

"We're going to celebrate when the time is right and we can all be together again," he said. "Right now, it's just been hard to make sense of everything that's happening, especially when you've dreamed of graduation day for so long. You know, sometimes our plans we write in ink should actually be written in pencil."

The Class of 2020 received well over 10,000 engagements related to graduation on College of Medicine social media through Sunday and many more on their own private pages. The commencement video alone received more than 2,000 engagements on Facebook. It was also available for viewing on YouTube and through the College of Medicine website. On Saturday morning, the commencement video was being viewed live on more than 850 screens across all platforms.



*College of Medicine Dean John P. Fogarty records a message for the graduating class. (Mark Bauer/College of Medicine)*

College of Medicine Dean John P. Fogarty recorded his graduation ceremony welcome remarks in an empty atrium ahead of the scheduled event, as did Florida Surgeon General Scott Rivkees, who was chosen to serve as the commencement speaker.

FSU President John Thrasher also recorded perhaps the most important words the students were waiting to hear, wherever their location and however they were watching: "By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Florida Board of Governors and the Florida State University Board of Trustees, I hereby confer upon each of you the degree of Doctor of Medicine."

At that moment, the Class of 2020 transitioned from a group of excited students to physicians, eager for the next phase of their medical education, which will include three to seven years of residency training and, for many, additional years of fellowship training.

After each graduate was "called to cross the stage" by Senior Associate Dean Alma Littles or Associate Dean Rob Campbell, their personal video or photograph was shared on the screen to replace the moment when they would have walked across the stage to embrace their faculty and university leaders in Ruby Diamond Concert Hall. They will receive their diplomas in the mail.

Chair of Clinical Sciences Jon Appelbaum, selected by the class to administer the Hippocratic Oath, asked the new graduates to recite after him. But as he called his lines on video, the synchronized response came as a virtual echo of individual graduate video clips combined into one.

Fogarty, who has presided over 12 of the college's 16 M.D. commencement ceremonies — but never like this, set the tone.

"While I know this is a disappointment to each of our graduates, please know that it is difficult for your faculty and staff, too," he said. "We greatly enjoy seeing the large family delegations cheering your accomplishments, seeing you walk across the stage, knowing how far you've come and the struggles you've had — knowing that you are now a physician and maybe even that we had a small role in helping you achieve this incredible goal.

"The Class of 2020 has had its share of challenges: Zika, Ebola, hurricanes Irma in 2017 and Michael in 2018 and now, COVID-19. None of these kept you from your goal, and your class stepped up time and again to the challenges."

To see social media messages for the Class of 2020 or to watch the graduation ceremony, visit <https://med.fsu.edu/FSUDocs2020>.



*Florida Surgeon General Scott A. Rivkees addresses the Class of 2020 in a pre-recorded message. (Glenn Sanger Hodgson/College of Medicine)*