

52ND

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
COMMENCEMENT



*College of
Osteopathic Medicine*

Center for Music and the
Worship Arts, Concert Hall

May 8, 2025 | 6 p.m.



scroll down

MESSAGE *from the* DEAN

Dear Graduates,

It is my distinct privilege to recognize and honor the Class of 2025, Liberty University's eighth class of osteopathic physicians. This is an important milestone in their medical journey. I, along with the faculty and staff, celebrate their accomplishment of successfully completing medical school, and we thank God for demonstrating His faithfulness in each of their lives these past four years.

The Class of 2025 is yet another reminder of a vision cast over 50 years ago by Jerry Falwell Sr. He stood on Liberty Mountain, envisioning and setting a goal to open a university that would send out *Champions for Christ* into every field — including medicine. In 2012, when Liberty broke ground on its Center for Medical and Health Sciences, which would house its College of Osteopathic Medicine, Jerry Falwell Jr. called it “the last piece of the puzzle” in his father's vision.

Class of 2025, you were chosen to attend LUCOM based on your character, capacity, and motivation,



MESSAGE *from the* DEAN

and it was truly a divine appointment that guided you here. We have seen you demonstrate your passion for medicine with a servant's heart (true concern for others) and an owner's mind (accepting responsibility for your actions) throughout your academic and clinical journey.

Always remember, your medical career is, first and foremost, about the patient. As doctors, osteopathic physicians, and healers, you are held to higher expectations and judged by higher standards. Civility, respect, integrity, honesty, altruism, compassion, and empathy are hallmarks of a great physician.

Secondly, remember important milestones (such as this) in your life. These significant achievements are not “check marks.” They serve as an indication of where you were: a reference point. Milestones denote mastery — as doctors, you will continue to learn and continue to perfect your skills. True learning captures knowledge. Applied knowledge brings more experiences, and more experiences capture more knowledge. A career in medicine is a lifelong journey and leads me to my third point.



MESSAGE *from* THE DEAN

Class of 2025, pursue excellence and challenge yourself. Do not settle on *good* when, with effort, *better* can be obtained and, with dedication, *best* is achievable. Ask the questions that others are not asking. Seek to understand beyond the prescribed parameters. Demonstrate intellectual curiosity. Show passion. Do more than the curriculum demands. Medicine is not a job; it is a lifetime calling.

As the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4:7, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” I pray these words will be true for each of you as you have trained for the race and have completed the first phase (medical school) of this marathon. You are winners! You are the next generation of physicians, *Champions for Christ*. Continue to be so! Congratulations as you enter your residency programs to spark the flame wherever God plants you next.

God Bless,

Joseph R. Johnson, DO, FACOOG (Dist)
Dean and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology



THE ACADEMIC SEAL



Each component of the academic seal was carefully chosen to incorporate the history and character of both the university and the osteopathic profession.



Staff of Asclepius



Liberty Bell



Shield of Faith



Bible



Octagon



Laurels



THE ACADEMIC SEAL



Staff of Asclepius

The words Liberty University Medicine run the circumference of the seal, and in the center is the **Staff of Asclepius**, the symbol of the osteopathic profession. Asclepius was the Greek god of healing, and his staff is encircled by a single serpent.



THE ACADEMIC SEAL



Liberty Bell

The **Liberty Bell** symbolizes the university's dedication to the founding principles of the United States.



THE ACADEMIC SEAL



Shield of Faith

Both the staff and the bell rest atop the **shield of faith**, symbolically taken up by students as they go out into the world to impact the culture for Christ.



THE ACADEMIC SEAL



Bible

The foundation of the seal — and the heart of Liberty University — is the **Bible**, revealing the truths of God and the principles by which we live. Always open, the Word of God speaks to everyone who listens.



THE ACADEMIC SEAL



Octagon

Behind the shield is the **octagon**, reflecting the classic Jeffersonian architecture of Liberty's first building and many of the buildings on campus.



THE ACADEMIC SEAL



Laurels

At the base of the seal are **laurels**, the symbol awarded to victors in ancient Greece. The laurels represent the mission of Liberty University, *Training Champions for Christ*, which has been our priority since 1971.



THE HISTORY *of the* HOODING CEREMONY

Doctoral hooding ceremonies are believed to have originated in European universities during the 12th century. They were first instituted to recognize graduating students as they entered into scholarly careers. The hooded robes themselves were often required for warmth in unheated medieval libraries and later became used as a practical uniform for scholars as they studied and produced written works. It was in the 15th century, near the time of the printing press, when robes became largely symbolic. Universities began to differentiate students by their academic majors and introduced specific colors to call attention to high distinctions. These hoods later became detached articles of dress and were given to the graduates as part of their commencement. The academic hoods used today signify a rite of passage and represent a lifetime commitment to a chosen career. The color for medicine is green and will serve as an expression to communicate the wearer's career in the osteopathic medical profession for the rest of their lives.



ACADEMIC DRESS

Academic dress had its beginnings in the Middle Ages in Europe, specifically at Oxford University, where medicine was considered to be the queen of the sciences. Each discipline is recognized by distinctive colors and designs. The special 8-sided tam is the headgear worn by doctoral graduates. The gown has an open front with bell-shaped sleeves. Doctoral gowns are further embellished with velvet trim in the form of crossbars on the sleeves. The lining of the hood features the colors of the institution conferring the degree — in this case, the colors red, white, and blue stand for Liberty University. The outer edge features the color of the discipline — in this case, green for Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine — because, according to medieval tradition, green is the color of healing herbs. The hoods vary in length — and for doctors, it's the longest at four feet. Only one hood may be worn at a time and outranks any previous degree a graduate has earned.



ORDER *of* CEREMONY

Welcome Timothy Leonard, M.D., Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Molecular & Cellular Sciences;
Professor of Pathology

Invocation Timothy Leonard, M.D., Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Molecular & Cellular Sciences;
Professor of Pathology

Dean’s Remarks Joseph R. Johnson, DO,
FACOOG (Dist)
Dean and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Presentation of Academic Dress. Arlene O’Donnell,
DO, IBCLC
Community-based Specialist

Presentation of Degrees Joseph R. Johnson, DO,
FACOOG (Dist)
Dean and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Benediction Sigmund P. Seiler, M.D.
Chair, Department of Family Medicine;
Associate Professor of Family Medicine