

Convocation 2023 Remarks by Salma Ghanem

Good morning, and welcome!

It's so wonderful to see all of you gathered here today as DePaul begins a new academic year. Happy New Year!!!

I would like to begin by extending a special welcome to the new faculty who have joined us. Over 50 full time faculty, in 23 different departments and programs across seven of our colleges are joining us.

Most of these new faculty colleagues are brand new to DePaul. Some have taught at DePaul before and are now stepping into new full-time tenure-line and non-tenure-line faculty roles. They attended a full-day orientation in the University Library yesterday learning about DePaul; I hope those who are with us today see that we mean it when we say how important the sense of community is for all of us and that we also know how to have fun.

And we have two new deans this year: John Milbauer, of the School of Music and Jennifer Mueller of the College of Education. I am also happy to announce that Lexa Murphy has been appointed permanent dean of the College of Communication, after several years of exemplary service as acting and then interim dean.

I would like to take a moment to thank Dana Hall and Mojdeh Bayat for serving as interim deans of Music and Education, respectively, and providing capable, steady leadership during especially challenging Winter and Spring quarters last year.

I am also pleased to welcome Valerie Johnson as a member of our team in the Office of the Provost as Associate Provost for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.



What is great about academia is that with the start of every academic year, there is a sense of renewal: building on the past with an eye toward the future.

Yes, challenges face higher education. Yes, DePaul is complex but the creativity, resilience, and intellect evident in the ways in which each member of the community rises to meet the challenges before us—and to give our all for our students—makes DePaul an awe-inspiring place to work.

Some of the work is visible to you today through the awards, recognitions and promotions listed in the program but much of the work is also invisible. St. Vincent and Louise de Marillac gave of themselves to help those in need. At DePaul, you all give of yourselves to help our students succeed. Thank you for all that you do and continue to do for our students.

And while the pandemic landscape is changing, its lingering effects are still with us. And we are just beginning to understand these effects. In some ways our students are in need of us more than ever.

We have to help them re-engage with our community and ensure that they not only want to come to DePaul, but stay at DePaul and cross that stage at commencement. For those of you who attended commencement, there is nothing more rewarding than hearing the cheers in the arena when students cross the stage.

And our students are truly creative as they cross the stage. From decorated hats and impressive moves on stage, you can tell how excited they are. Let's work together to have each one of our students reach the finish line and experience that moment! (caveat: we can skip the cart wheels some of our graduates attempted on stage)!

Let's take a moment of reflection on last year. We all would agree that it was not an easy year. But don't let that shadow the collaboration by which we collectively addressed the budget and the collaboration underway in the faculty composition and salary studies. Don't forget the moments of joy and celebration and the accomplishments we experienced. And there were many!

We welcomed a new president and he energized the community through the Design DePaul process. Information was shared, communication was increased transparency was evident, and we remained committed to outstanding teaching, academic excellence, and offering our students real-world experience through community engagement.

We also remained committed to compassionately upholding the dignity of all members of our diverse community. Our mission will never change. Let's ensure that our community is truly inclusive not only for our students but for our faculty and staff. Let's continue to infuse our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion into everything we do.

Of course, you are all doing so much to make DePaul a place our students want to call home.

For one, you are introducing innovative curriculums and in-demand programs. Over 55 proposals addressing program revisions, addition of concentrations, and new programs were approved.

These proposals came from all over campus several were interdisciplinary in nature such as a Master of Legal Studies Concentration in Data Privacy and Cyber Security Law and a minor in Business of Visual Arts between the department of History of Art and Architecture and the College of Business.

In addition, at the end of last year, I sent out a request for ideas and have received over 60 proposals for ideas to explore. I will be sending out a follow up request soon after we are back into the swing of things.

Because of the quality of our programs and our recruitment efforts, DePaul is becoming a major destination for international students. Last I checked, graduate student enrollment at DePaul is 120% higher than it was last year. As such we are working on providing comprehensive support for their journey at DePaul: from ensuring their legal status in the US, to supporting their health and wellness, their academic success, and their dreams of a successful career.

Talking about support, I have sent out information regarding the resources available for our faculty and staff in terms of the use of AI and the possible

implications for the classroom as well as issues of academic integrity. Don't hesitate to reach out to the Center of Teaching and Learning as they have compiled valuable resources for you.

While we are on the topic of technology, the Student Success Hub went live in April as the new platform behind our BlueStar advising system, and we are able to communicate more effectively with our students. Thanks to the collaboration of at least fifty people from Information Services, the University Registrar's Office, the college advising offices, and additional supporting offices, the launch went remarkably smoothly. Our first messaging initiative was a series of communications to current students in Spring quarter reminding them to register without delay for Fall quarter. Enrollment numbers so far indicate that we will meet our projections for Fall 2023!!!

Another significant milestone of the last year was the Liberal Studies Program and University Honors Program completing the three-year Academic Program Review Process. External reviewers for both programs praised the leadership of LSP Director John Shanahan and University Honors Program Director Jenny Conary, and were especially impressed by the level of faculty involvement and staff support across the university and by the quality of our LSP and Honors classes.

The reviewers had suggestions for improvement as well; most of all, they urged us to ensure that students and faculty alike understand the purpose of these programs and their requirements. At this time when people are questioning the value of liberal arts, we need show its relevance. Over the coming year, we will be working to address the issues raised by the reviewers and to further strengthen our commitment to the liberal arts.

I'm also proud of the research productivity of our faculty and students. Even as we worked collaboratively with faculty and staff to improve our grant-support processes in the last fiscal year, DePaul reached a 10-year high in external grant awards. DePaul principal investigators supported by many staff in multiple offices received 138 new and continuation awards from external funding agencies; revenue from sponsored projects totaled more than 16.8 million dollars. At the same time, almost 1 million dollars in internal funding was awarded to 75

different projects. DePaul also supported more than 146 undergraduate students doing research under the supervision of faculty mentors.

During the inaugural year of a new research partnership with Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, three projects involving collaborative and interdisciplinary work in artificial intelligence, biomedicine and healthcare. We are looking forward to reviewing a second round of applications this Fall.

Whether it is in our work with undergraduate or graduate students, whether it is in Lincoln Park, the Loop, Cinespace, overseas, or online, a quality education, in all its manifestations, is our goal.

I hope I gave you a glimpse of the awe-inspiring work of our university community. No matter the challenges that come our way, let us continue to work together in service of our students, in service of education and in service of our mission.

Thank you for everything you do for DePaul and will continue to do for DePaul. Now, let's have a great academic year!