



## WHITE COAT ADDRESS, 2010 DEAN DENNIS S. CHARNEY, MD

MOUNT SINAI  
SCHOOL OF  
MEDICINE

Dennis S. Charney, MD, The Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Dean of Mount Sinai School of Medicine and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs of The Mount Sinai Medical Center, delivered the following remarks at the 13th Annual White Coat Ceremony on September 13, 2010, in Stern Auditorium.

The White Coat Ceremony marks the beginning of the academic year and welcomes first-year students into the medical profession. As students are helped into their white coats by faculty, they are reminded of the significance of their profession and their responsibility to balance scientific knowledge with compassion.

Welcome! Honored guests, Mount Sinai faculty, family members and friends, and Class of 2014.

This is a day of remembrance, expectation, and, most important, thankfulness.

The class of 2014 enters Mount Sinai School of Medicine at a propitious time. The School of Medicine is one of the most outstanding medical institutions in the world. We are in the midst of implementing a 2.25 billion dollar strategic plan, which includes the recruitment of new faculty from around the world, updating and building new facilities and the construction of a magnificent 550,000 sq. foot research building one block north of where we are today.

The quality of our scientists and physicians has never been stronger. Literally, every day in our laboratories a scientific breakthrough occurs and every day a patient's life is saved because of superior and sometimes even miraculous, medical treatment.

And... what about our medical students?

Not only are our medical students among the most academically accomplished in the nation, but they are men and women of high character from all walks of life.

Class of 2014, you embody what Mount Sinai stands for: Commitment, Service, Excellence.

Each of you are about to embark on an exploration that will rival climbing your own personal Mount Everest. The 20th century was the century of physics leading to incredible discoveries that have changed our daily lives. The 21st Century is the century of Biology, promising to revolutionize the practice of medicine. Advances in imaging technology will open new windows into the functioning of the human body. The ability to sequence the human genome – which has been reduced in cost from \$1 billion a decade ago to \$10,000 today and will be \$1,000 in a few years – will enable us to predict, prevent, and treat human diseases as never before.

As medical students, during the first 2 years, we are going to teach you how the human body works – all 100 trillion cells, 206 bones, 600 muscles, and 22 internal organs. Throughout your years as a medical student, you are going to have the privilege of working with and learning from patients. Your patients will allow you to witness the most fundamental of human experience – fighting for life, accepting death.

To whom much is given, much is expected: Luke 12:48.

Class of 2014 – Mount Sinai takes pride in its dedication to mentorship. Your professors realize what a pleasure it is to educate gifted students – and therefore we insist that our teaching be of the highest quality.

Much will be expected of you. You will follow in the footsteps of Mount Sinai graduates over the past 38 years – who as great scientists and physicians have made pioneering contributions to American Medicine.

There is no question, given your academic skills, that most of you will be highly successful. The truth is – you are competitive, know how to study and learn, and do well on tests. But in order to achieve greatness – you, the Class of 2014, should work together as a team.

Let me give you an example:

In May 1804, Capt. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark headed up the Missouri River with 45 men and a well-stocked keelboat. They were on the most important expedition in American history – the United States' first official exploration into unknown spaces. They would be the first American citizens to experience the Great Plains, to see the daunting peaks of the Rocky Mountains and struggle over them, and after encountering cold, hunger, danger, and wonders beyond belief – they would become the first of their nation to reach the Pacific Ocean by land. They wrote the first scientific descriptions of an astounding 178 plants and 122 animals.

How did they do it? Lewis and Clark were extraordinary friends and they molded their men into a great team. They demonstrated there is almost nothing that people cannot do if they support each other. The men came to love each other, to become a band of brothers and together they were able to accomplish feats that astonish us even today.

What were they called? The Corps of Discovery!

Class of 2014 – I want you to become a Corps of Discovery by working together, supporting each other and developing friendships that last a lifetime – you and us will be amazed by what you can accomplish.

So, today, your journey begins. It will be challenging, anxiety provoking, there will be highs and lows – but ultimately, it will be rewarding and a defining experience of your life.

I leave you with a message that was given to the late, great UCLA basketball coach and mentor, John Wooden, by his father. He carried this creed with him always.

Be True to yourself

Make each day a masterpiece

Help others

Drink deeply from good books

Make friendship a fine art

Build a shelter against a rainy day