

# Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University Commencement

May 17, 2015

## Bill Cummings' Remarks



Good afternoon, **everyone!**

And what a glorious day this is!

We are just delighted to be with you all for this, the 33<sup>rd</sup> **Grafton** graduation, and now, the **10th** graduation from the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine.

Joyce and I have been so very proud to call Cummings School our most **significant** single philanthropic involvement.

We are especially pleased to congratulate all 38 of you who have completed such rigorous programs, to earn Master of Science degrees today, plus **one Ph.D.** degree, and 95, that's **95** brand new **Doctors of Veterinary Medicine!**

Graduates, **please** consider all of your parents, guardians, family and friends... All of your instructors, professors, and Dean Debbie, too, who have **all** done so much to help you achieve your dreams... **Graduates, let's hear your thanks for all of them!**

## Joyce Cummings' Remarks

We want you to be among the **first** to learn of our most **recent** major philanthropic endeavor. It is an excellent example of how one thing can set off a chain of events that leads to something unexpected and extraordinary. The story actually begins in 2009, **but don't worry** – this is the **abridged** version.

Almost six years ago, Bill and I participated in a Tufts Alumni "Travel and Learn" trip to Israel. There, we met a remarkable Holocaust survivor who stayed in our home when he came to Medford to speak to Tufts students.

We were inspired to then create the Cummings Hillel Interfaith Program in Holocaust and Genocide Education at Tufts.

As part of that program, we began supporting groups of Tufts undergrads each year to travel to **Rwanda** to live briefly at a high school for 500 of Rwanda's most vulnerable teenagers.

After receiving many very moving letters from participants about their life-changing visits to **Agahozo Shalom Youth Village**, Bill and I decided to experience it for ourselves.

So, in 2012, we **visited** Rwanda and included four days at this extraordinary Village, as well as extensive visits to two hospitals operated by Dr. **Paul Farmer's** Partners In Health.

Being very impressed with **both organizations**, we introduced them. Before long, PIH was providing exams and **vaccinations** to students at the Village, and the Village was supplying PIH with extremely well-educated interns.

Discussions began about how PIH will use some of the Village's surplus land, while employing more graduates to grow food.

This, is a real-life example of the power of synergy -- accomplishing much greater things when working together, than when going it alone.

We then **returned** to Rwanda in 2013 to attend the dedication ceremony of the country's first and only outpatient cancer infusion center, which the Foundation funded, and PIH built.

During that visit, at the recommendation of Dean Kochevar, we visited University of Rwanda's veterinary college, in the small town of Nyagatare.

We were astounded to find that the library had 25 year-old text books, and equally old drug guides, and no computers. It had labs with scarcely any equipment.

Graduates had simply not gained the skills necessary to even actually **practice** veterinary medicine. We visited dental clinics where teeth are cleaned and they are extracted, but they do not have materials to fill cavities

In Nyagatare, through one of our guides, **Dr. Hellen Amuguni**, we learned that the faculty and students at the Cummings School think far beyond the boundaries of this beautiful Grafton campus *and* the boundaries of their discipline.

Cummings **students** think **globally**, extending their resources and significant expertise by partnering with other schools and with other health professionals.

We learned that when veterinarians **collaborate** with physicians, dentists, nurses, and others in a "**One Health**" **approach**, they can impact entire communities, countries, and indeed, the world.

**One Health** suggests that the power of **synergy** holds true for significant global problems such as malnutrition and infectious diseases like Ebola.

The world is better off when health professionals work **in concert** with those from other disciplines to search for and implement the most effective solutions.

**Through the Cummings School**, the Foundation funded an ambulatory clinic that brings veterinary students and faculty, and sometimes nurses or public health practitioners, to rural areas to fulfill acute, chronic, and preventative health care needs that often span multiple disciplines.

Our visit to Nyagatare, through the Cummings School, and our knowledge of the One Health approach has directly led **now** to a brand new **University of Global Health Equity**...the University of Global Health Equity.

## **Bill Cummings' Remarks**

The first phase of this innovative new **health care university** in Rwanda is now being created and accredited with strong backing from Tufts University and Cummings Foundation.

Operated by Partners in Health, **University of Global Health Equity** will train generations of health sciences professionals, including **post** graduate veterinarians.

UGHE will **use** a **One Health curriculum** that will help break down traditional boundaries between academic disciplines.

Tufts and Harvard, have already been identified as founding academic collaborators, and we anticipate there being **many** ways students **and** faculty here can become involved in the coming years, including **internships** and post-retirement teaching appointments.

We hope many fellow **Jumbos** will **seize** these opportunities to be part of something very special to help drive transformational change in Africa and in global health.

Whether *your* career takes you to a veterinary clinic in Massachusetts, a village in rural Africa, **or anywhere in between**, remember the awesome potential of synergy.

Don't live your life in a silo, folks, but be bold, and be the first to extend your hand across the boundaries of health and science. Your impact can often be far greater than you could possibly imagine.

**Congratulations** graduates! You have worked long and hard. Go forth, and do **great** things with your careers!