

THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY

K. Patricia Cross

Harvard Graduate School of Education

It is a very special honor to receive this degree from the College of Applied Health Sciences of Thomas Jefferson University.

Health sciences are, in so many ways, the symbolic profession of our times. Profound questions that arise for all service professions seem raised to heightened awareness in the health professions--perhaps because there they frequently become life and death matters.

We are treated almost daily now to the expose of the misdoings of some highly education person in a white collar profession who has violated, not only the standards of his or her profession, but the standards of simple personal integrity. The general public, while temporarily outraged, seems to forgive and forget upon hearing the all-too-frequent words, "I made a mistake" or "I used poor judgment."

You who have prepared for careers in health services cannot afford those words. You are expected to have it all together--concern and compassion for the human beings in your care, mastery of increasingly complex scientific and technical knowledge, understanding of and commitment to the ethics of your profession, and a core of personal values that guide your decisions, large and small.

Receipt of Doctor of Humane Letters, Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, Pa., June 5, 1987.

That is why I say it is a very special privilege to join a graduating class that has had to think about the major questions of our times. What is the appropriate balance between what we can do with scientific knowledge and what we should do with it? How do we operate on the edge of that intricate balance between the health of the mind and that of the body, between the protection of individual rights and those of society, between cost and care?

It is unlikely that your education has given you the answers to these questions. But it should have made you aware of their existence, and it should have provided the framework and tools for thinking about them.

Education in these times of constantly exploding knowledge is concerned less with answers and more with questions, less with storing knowledge and more with using it, less with memorizing facts and more with understanding principles. Ultimately, the quality of your education at Thomas Jefferson University will be judged, not so much by what you have learned, as by what you are capable of learning. Knowledge, especially in the health professions, will not stand still. If you are to act as responsible health care professionals, you will have to become lifelong learners.

This ceremony, in which I am privileged to participate today, is called "commencement" because it symbolizes the rededication and commencement of all of us into a life of learning, using the foundations laid down in formal education to raise questions, to seek solutions, to apply knowledge--in short to use our minds to improve the quality of life.

Thank you for the honor of joining faculty, graduates,
parents, and friends in this rededication to learning.

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