

Ron E. Lumbra, '83

Chair of the University of Vermont Board of Trustees

Commencement Greeting – Sunday, May 22, 2022

President Garimella, distinguished members of the platform party, special guests, family, friends, faculty, staff, and especially graduates of the class of 2022, on behalf of the board of trustees of the University of Vermont, I welcome you to this celebration!

I would like to begin this morning by getting right to the heart of the matter: Will you please join me in congratulating the incredible UVM class of 2022!

Graduates, as I look out across all of you here today, with so many of your friends and mentors, family and other loved ones gathered to celebrate you, I marvel at what you've accomplished. Today you are joining the proud ranks of UVM alumni – there are lots of us out there, over one hundred thousand, in fact, and each of us is always happy to meet a fellow Catamount – but your class is unquestionably a special one.

Just think: for those of you who started at UVM in the fall of 2018, you have spent more time as college students *after* this pandemic began than you had the chance to before. You have faced this once-in-a-lifetime challenge, and you have made the most of it. Together.

In fact, by every measure that I and everyone here today can see, you have *thrived*. Let me say: We are so proud of you.

We are proud to know that you have been deeply engaged in our Vermont communities, as volunteers, as interns, as student-teachers, and as mentors for young people hoping to follow your footsteps at UVM.

We are proud to know that you have excelled as researchers in our world-class laboratories, as performers in brilliant plays and recitals, and as championship-level student-athletes, taking part in what I think must be the most successful year in UVM athletics history.

And we are proud to know that you are – truly – ready for whatever is next. Among you today are new UVM alumni headed off to become business leaders and public servants, social workers and graduate students, physicians and politicians. Some of you have earned fellowships to study around the world and some of you have earned positions in the small Vermont businesses that make this state so special.

It is a cliché of commencement speeches (and trust me, I've heard many) to say that your college experience has prepared you for the unexpected. For everyone graduating today, it's safe to say: that is no cliché. And we are proud of the resilience you've shown, the sense of community you've developed, and the remarkable experiences you've shared with each other. It has all made you ready, I think, for anything that could come your way.

I hope that you feel ready to step courageously out into the world. And I hope that as you do, you remain connected to UVM. I know that there are many friends, faculty, coaches, counselors and others who helped you along the way, and I know that they are proud of you.

Take care of yourselves, care for each other, and have an amazing commencement day.

Congratulations and best wishes. Go Cats!