

Global Campus Fall Virtual Graduation 2021

[MUSIC PLAYS]

DAVE CILLAY:

Good morning. It is amazing being with you today. I am honored to be one of the first to say congratulations on your graduation. Today is special. Special for you for sure. But it is also special for all of us. This is the very first graduation ceremony that Global Campus has conducted as a commencement. It is the first time of doing this, and hopefully it will be wonderful.

I got to say when Nolan, our president, came to Debbie O'Donnell and I. Debbie is our Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and said you know the student government would like to host their own graduation ceremony. We said that sounds exciting, that sounds great, what time next year should we do that? And Nolan said No, no. We'd like to do it this semester. Once Debbie and I picked our chins up off the floor, we said all right we will look and see if we can make this happen. Here we are today.

So, I have to say not only thank you to our student government, but also how much we appreciate their leadership and things that they have done to improve Global Campus. Not just with this ceremony, but all the things that happen throughout the year. So, thank you I am honored. Also, as exciting as the graduation ceremony, in just a few short weeks Global Campus is going to be celebrating its 30th anniversary. That means we have been doing online distance education for almost three decades.

I think back to when we first started doing this. The process for the student was they would get a study pack, lectures on VHS cassette tapes (I don't know if many of you remember what those were) and their textbook. And they would work through assignments, complete the assignment by writing it out on a piece of paper, they would put it in a pre-stamped envelope, they would mail it back to the Distance Degree Program (DDP), someone at DDP would open it up, put it in another pre-stamped envelope and mail it off to the faculty member. The faculty member would then grade it, review it, put notes on it, put it in an envelope, mail it back to DDP. DDP would open it up, put it in another envelope and mail it back to the student. The student would react to it, and if there were corrections that had to be made, they would put it another envelope and that whole process would begin again. And I think about where we started and where we're at now. The type of community we've been able to build, the interactions that students have, not just with faculty but with one another, with their advisors, with the folks in the Global Campus. I am amazed at the progress and the transition that we have made over the course of 30 years.

I have to think, looking forward the future is really exciting. If we look forward another 30 years, think of the type of environment we are going to be able to create. Even though you are graduating here today, our graduates, I hope you stay connected. I hope you keep pushing the Global Campus and Washington State University to mature and evolve to something more, something better. So, enough about Global Campus. Enough about things other than you.

Although it is our time to celebrate your accomplishment, I do want to take one moment and acknowledge the folks that got you here today. So, this is a call-to-action on our graduates right now. What I'd like you to do is write out the names of the individuals who have acknowledged you, supported you, encouraged you, loved you to move forward in your graduation. Please put those in the YouTube text—partners, children, grandparents, spouses, an advisor, neighbors, friends, anyone who has helped you in this tremendous journey to move forward. We'd like to be able to recognize those folks on the YouTube channel.

As those names are coming forward, I would like to acknowledge the fact, and this is something I believe in, often times an individual's life is defined by moments in time, by soundbites. I will throw one out for you. College graduate. You are a college graduate. You have done what very few people ever start and even fewer accomplish. You are a college graduate. More importantly, and again this is my bias, you are a graduate of Washington State University. You are now and forever a Cougar.

You are part of an intense, passionate, worldwide family of Cougars. Congratulations and Go Cougars! I would now like to introduce our president, Kirk Schulz.

(Video plays)

KIRK SCHULZ:

Thanks Dave. First off, let me take this opportunity to congratulate all of our graduates today. This is our first ever virtual commencement for our Global Campus. We always had the opportunity for Global Campus students to participate on in person ceremonies here in Pullman, but this really represents a milestone in a first step for Global Campus. Thanks for joining us today. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the family members joining us today, whether brothers, sisters, or grandparents, children, spouses, it does not matter. Today is a family celebration. I urge you to all feel good about this particular milestone in our graduates lives. I also want to remind everybody that this is one of those places along a lifelong journey.

This doesn't represent the end, but it represents just that particular place. I look forward to hearing from all of our graduates today the great things they are going to do with that Washington State degree as they move through life. I'm proud of you all. Congratulations on the great job you have done, and as always Go Cougars!

DAVE CILLAY:

Thank you, President Schulz. It is now my honor to introduce a very special person. She was the past ASWSU Global president come back to join us. Gina Vasquez has a few words for us.

GINA M. VASQUEZ:

Thank you, Dave. I have to say, it is an honor to be invited back to share a few words with our graduates. The small gesture in of itself proves a realization that I had halfway through 2020. That was that despite all of the present challenges, which there were many, it also created opportunities for connection within the communities that we all exist. I know Dave touched on this as well a little bit. Whether that was with university staff and admin, your family, friends, coworkers, or the barista who knew your order by heart and knew your name. All of these connections have brought us here today to celebrate your graduation. This milestone is a result of your passion, and perseverance, and ability to lean on your support networks. There have actually been countless studies that have shown that joy and gratitude are intertwined. While you celebrate your accomplishments today, be sure to show gratitude to someone you leaned on throughout this journey. Now, I would like to present our current ASWSUG president. His name is Nolan Thomaswick.

NOLAN THOMASWICK:

Thank you very much, Gina. Thank you for joining us today. Good morning, fellow Cougars. Here you are at the end of a long road of readings, math problems, reference pages, and essays. For some of you this is your first time in college, and for some of you, your fourth. Some of you are first-generation students and some of you are the latest in a long line of family graduates. Some of you have three children, some are one of three children. These differences are wonderful and should be celebrated. But in a world where the powers that be do their damndest to sow division daily, let us not forget that which brings all of us together, hating Proctor U. [Laughs] But I digress. For some 20 months we have lived a new

normal, scrambling to adapt to the ever-changing status quo. It's been a struggle at times, perhaps you even lost something or someone incredibly important along the way. During this past year and 1/2 my mind has perpetually returned to Tolkien, to the beginning of The Fellowship of the Ring. While talking about the return of a vast subjugating evil and the need to do something about it, a dejected Frodo (he's a hobbit) says: "I wish it need not have happened in my time." To which Gandalf responds: "So do I. So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us." The dark lord Sauron aside, you have done just that. It does not matter why you chose WSU, when you chose it, where you chose it, or how. Whether you are 23 or 63, whether you're in Washington or Florida. You chose this path, you persevered through tumultuous uncertainties, and here you are. As Barry Manilow might say, [Sings] "Looks like you made it."

We can remember the struggles we faced and all we've lost. But today we find reason to be thankful and celebrate. Celebrate our support systems, all that we still have, and ourselves. You are college graduates, gosh darn it. You are stars. Now go do some nuclear fusion or something and try hard to keep getting up every morning. Congratulations fall class of 2021! I'll now pass it back to chancellor Cillay.

DAVE CILLAY:

Thank you, Nolan. Thank you, Gina. Well done. We are doing something a little different today, like Global Campus normally does. At a traditional commencement ceremony, the graduates would stand, their names would be read, and family and friends would shout out praise, acknowledgement of the individual who has just been acknowledged. We can't do that here today, but what we can ask is family and friends who are on YouTube, if as your graduate is being announced in this upcoming ceremony please put in words of encouragement, praise, and acknowledgement in the chat on YouTube.

Before we get to our ceremony, I do want to point out the fact that one graduate from the ceremony is missing, and that's Gina. She is a 2021 graduate in Anthropology. Let me be the first to say congratulations Gina. Well done. Now our graduates.

(Video plays)

SPEAKER:

(Names being called)

DAVE CILLAY:

That was wonderful. Congratulations to all of our graduates. Again, it has been an honor to be here with you today. To be the first to say congratulations. This concludes our official ceremony. I hope you will take President Schulz's words to heart. I hope you celebrate today. I hope you can connect with friends and family and just relish in this moment. This accomplishment that you've all crossed that finish line to see. Before we go, I do want to take a moment and thank all of the Global Campus staff and faculty who attended today, either here in the Spark, or online encouraging and celebrating our graduates. Thank you so much.

Graduates, congratulations! You are officially alumni. I hope you stay connected to this university either through the Alumni Association or just messages back to us. We are so proud of you. Have a great day. Go Cougs!