

Rowe Scholar Student Speech for CUE Naming Ceremony

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Thank you, President Herbst, Chairman McHugh, Provost Choi, and Drs. John and Valerie Rowe, for the opportunity to be here this afternoon. And I don't say that lightly. The very reason I am standing not just at this ceremony, but on this campus as part of the UConn community, is because of the Rowe Scholars Program.

I doubt I was the only high school student who considered various options for college and tried to imagine where this major decision would take me. Who did I really hope to become and what did I hope to achieve? Even if we do not want to admit it, those questions can sometimes weigh on us.

My final decision for college came down to two: UConn and what I'll just call "another school". Both had a great reputation for academics, provided an excellent campus community and lifestyle, and offered financial support for my degree. But only one had the Rowe Scholars Program.

And here I am, a junior at the University of Connecticut. And I've loved every minute of it. The experiences I have gained as an UConn student and a Rowe Scholar have advanced my sense of self and given me the confidence to trust in my abilities to succeed.

I think that is part of the genius of the Rowe Scholars Program. It brings together a diverse group of people all striving for a common cause: that of the common good. Rowe Scholars are more than just scholastic achievers. They are ambitious leaders who push themselves and each other to take calculated risks, infuse creativity with hard facts, and find ways each day to better themselves.

It is easy to waver on the serious decisions in life, and for me I wondered if the pre-med track and medical school were right. But the Rowe Scholars Program continues to challenge me—and my classmates—to face those hard decisions. Hopefully we make the right ones. And we are not just hearing about these important lessons in classrooms; we are absorbing them through experience.

I have spent time in labs working on real research, networked with health care leaders at the professional development dinner series, taken courses geared towards cultural and societal influences on health, and engaged in conversations with my fellow scholars, learning about the phenomenal things they are doing with their undergraduate years. I have a tendency to be a competitive person, so their successes keep me motivated to pursue my own course.

The big question for me as I began my journey here at UConn was did I want to become a doctor? Thanks to the Rowe Scholars Program, and by extension its advisors, committees, faculty, and my peers, I can say with pure confidence that yes, medicine is my future. I could not imagine myself doing anything else.

Drs. John and Valerie Rowe, your namesake program was the catalyst for my career, maybe even my life's work. The ways it has helped mold me, even indirectly, have changed me as a person. I would wager it has changed all of us. It is only fitting that this building—the heart of undergraduate education for the University of Connecticut—memorializes your name as well. Though I was not part of the decision to secure your legacy on this campus, I am proud to be here to witness it. For your commitment to this university, this program, and this state—for your dedication to health care and education—we may never be able to thank you enough. But this is a good place to start.

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