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[ captioner standing by ]

[ soft music playing ]

>> Good afternoon everyone. Please be seated. We are overjoyed that you could join us on this beautiful afternoon. Greetings. I am Michèle Alexandre a member of the faculty and Dean of Stetson University college of law. Welcome honored guests, students, faculty, family members and spouses, partners and friends and most importantly graduates. Welcome to our December 2020 commencement ceremony. Let's hear it for our graduates.

[Applause]

We are so excited, this is a wonderful, wonderful celebration of a class that we'll remember for decades to come, the 2020 class. And today is, of course, because of all that and because they get to embark on their career is a unique celebration. And we will recognize in this ceremony classes of December 9, 2019, May and August 2020 and December 2020. We are delighted that you could all be with us today in‑person for this celebration. First, I would like to acknowledge our active duty military personnel and all veterans in this graduating class and all faculty and in our audience. Please stand so that we can recognize your service.

[Applause]

>> Let me take a moment to introduce those on stage with me and those who are part of the procession. We are honored to have with us Dr. Christopher Roellke, President of the Stetson University. Dr. Penter, Executive Vice President and Provost of Stetson University, Jason Bent Associate Dean for academic affairs and professor of law. Darryl Wilson Associate Dean for faculty and strategic initiatives and professor of law, bean professor of law and Dr. Hudson Assistant Dean for student affairs. I would like to also recognize those honored guests who due to COVID restrictions unfortunately could not be part of this in‑person ceremony. They graciously sent a personal video to the graduates. We invite you to view their special videos on the graduation web page. They are, Maureen Breakiron‑Evans, chair of the Board of Trustees, Greg Coleman, chair of the Board of overseers, Kevin Iurato, President of the Stetson lawyer’s alumni association and Rachel Wise the outgoing student bar association President. As many of you know, Stetson Law has a pro bono requirement for graduation. Our December 2019 and May 2020 graduates and students volunteered more than 34,000 hours of community service. Many of our graduates took the pro bono requirements to the next level by continuing to serve their communities and society even after they had far exceeded the required number of hours using the skills and tools learned at Stetson. They doubled down on their commitment during the pandemic, creating new ways to be of use to the community. You will recognize those graduates by their blue cord, representing our blues award for pro bono service.

[Applause]

>> It is my hope that you will continue to serve your communities with distinction and professionalism as a Stetson lawyer. This year at orientation, I told a group of first years, fresh face and eager, that they could be forging a new path that no one had walked before. I impressed upon them that having empathy for others, grit and resilience are the pivotal foundation of a good attorney. As I thought about what I wanted to say to you today, I found myself reflecting on those words, because I realized that all 2020 graduates are the embodiment of them. You have already forged your path to condition that no one had encountered before. As a result, you now know what it is like to successfully complete one of your life's biggest challenges, despite the immense hurdles that were placed on that path. You have done it.

[Applause]

>> This year you have shown that resilience, that Stetson Law grit and a special breed of dogged commitment. You have dug deep and transcended to reach this amazing milestone. I have so proud of you, of who you are as humans, scholars and legal minds. In answering the call to become an attorney you are beginning your purpose in life. You now have the tools to be change agents and just warriors who can transform the world. So today we celebrate you, your graduation, your accomplishments. We take this moment to cherish all that you have done, and we feel hope and excitement for all that you will do. I now invite President Roellke to offer greetings.

[Applause]

>> Good afternoon. And I would like to have 3 shout‑outs if I may before I begin. How about a shout‑out for the faculty, staff, administrators and all the helpers here that made today's event possible.

[Applause]

The second shout‑out, if you will, goes to the family members and the loved ones that are out in the audience and also who could not be with us because of the pandemic. Let's give them a round of applause for helping these students get through their legal education.

[Applause]

>> And a super loud and I hope boisterous shout‑out for our graduating class of 2020.

[Applause]

>> We gather today to celebrate the accomplishment of our students who have rightfully earned their juris doctor and other advanced law degrees. You have made it to the end of a remarkable journey literally unlike any other before you. As you join the Stetson alumni network and become a part of an enduring community of Stetson Law graduates contemplate for a moment where you were at this time last year. You were facing your last year of Law School and just a little more than a year ago I was named by our Board of Trustees as Stetson's tenth President. I imagine we both looked forward to the year ahead with a lot of excitement and anticipation. Comes Gray was 1742 when he wrote ignorance is less because there's no way we can perceive what might lie ahead and yet here you are, you made it. You made it through dock‑downs, online learning, virtual meetings, bad audio, lost internet connections, canceled bar exams, masks, hand washing, physical distancing. You endured. Your friends, families and faculty are assembled here to celebrate you and I believe this is in fact a very special graduation, because you achieved your degree, and you did it in this year. You were not only tested in the classroom but ultimately by life. For me and maybe for many of you, it would have been impossible to endue and thrive this past year without one thing, kindness. Since I first stepped on to Stetson's campus, I have quoted the wisdom of childhood educator Mr. Rogers who said there are 3 ways to ultimate success. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. The third is to be kind. So when the Dean and I first stated the work and planning in Gulfport and Deland we made a conscious decision that everything we did, everything we planned would be done with kindness, with empathy and with agency. So today as I congratulate you for becoming part of the rich tradition of Stetson Law graduates who have gathered in this same spot I ask you to consider the small and large acts of kindness you may have received along your journey. As you take the countless hours you have given in classrooms, courtrooms, clinical experiences and competitions out into the world and into your careers, I ask you to consider repaying the kindness you have received with the kindness you may give. Why? Kindness not only matters, it enables us to listen, to engage with others unlike ourselves and to consider paths we can forge together to make our community, in fact the world, a better place. The mission of Stetson University college of law is to be a dynamic and supportive scholarly community whose faculty and students will have a meaningful and far reaching impact on the law, the profession and on society. Here at Stetson you have learned the law and the skills required to apply it to legal practice with integrity and with professionalism. I ask today that you add kindness to your practice. As you grow and thrive I challenge you to help those around you to thrive, to offer small acts of kindness to your clients, your partners, your institutions, your organizations, those around you that you love and care about. Ultimately this is how you'll become the lawyer you set out to be, serving justice wherever life takes you. Congratulations.

[Applause]

>> It is now time to celebrate our graduates.

[Applause]

President Roellke today we recognize the December 2019 and May, August 2020 graduates for the juris doctor degree. We anticipate all candidates listed in the graduation program will meet the requirements for their respective degrees. As such I ask you prospectively confirm their degrees on them. All graduates, please stand.

>> It is an honor and a privilege to confer these degrees. By virtue of the authority invested in me by the Board of Trustees of Stetson University pursuant to the charter granted by the state of Florida I pronounce you graduates of Stetson University and confer upon you all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto. Graduates please come forward as your name is called.

[Applause]

>> I'll now welcome Associate Dean Bent and Dr. Hudson to call the names of the graduates.

>> Good afternoon. We begin by recognizing our spring and summer 2020JD graduates. First Arionna C .

Randy C. Certificate in concentration in advocacy.

Victoria S. Certificate of concentration in environmental law.

The diploma for our next graduate will be present bid her grandfather Michael S. 1968 graduate of the college of law. Victoria S  JD/MBA.

Kelly S .

Kevin S .

The diploma for our next graduate will be presented by his father Joseph Stewart a 1984 graduate of the college of law.

Logan Stewart, Victor Owhaley award.

Daniel T .

Amber T .

Ryan W .

Claire W, Victor Owhaley award.

Kathryn W, certificate of concentration in environmental law, certificate of concentration in international law, Hern environmental award.

Steven W. Honors program.

Savannah W. Certificate of concentration in social justice advocacy and Victor Owhaley award.

The diploma for the next graduate will be presented by her father David W, 1986 graduate of the college of law.

Abigail W .

The diploma for our next graduate will be presented by her brother Jay Wise, 2005 graduate of the college of law.

Rachel Wise certificate of concentration in advocacy and international Academy of trial lawyers award.

Vacilius Z.

We will now recognize the fall 2020 JD candidates.

[ recognizing graduates ]

Sarah F .

Benjamin F, Victor Owhaley award.

The diploma for our next graduate will be presented by his wife. 2018 graduate of the college of law. Steven J .

The diploma for our next graduate will be presented bid her sister, Jillian, 2019 graduate of the college of law.

Kara H .

Whitney L .

Lorenzie.

Ashley M .

Erin M .

Anna M .

Amber N, Victor OWhaley award.

Anna P. Honors program.

Hunter S. Victor OWhaley award.

Brenna S .

The diploma for our next graduate will be presented by her father, 1989 graduate of the college of law. Amy T, Victor OWhaley award.

Michele W .

Allen W .

Niere. Thank you. Congratulations graduates.

>> A joyous day indeed. Graduates Stetson is it a community dedicated to excellence, our faculty serve as teachers, mentors and role models, they demonstrate the values of leadership and service and they serve as inspiration to all of us. Graduates, Stetson University college of law was founded in 1900. We know that you will follow more than a century of tradition as lawyers and leaders who are committed to the rule of law, which transforms society, who represents the values of your Law School, your University and our profession. Today we celebrate you and from today forward, we are proud to call you graduates and alumni of the Stetson University college of law.

[Applause]

>> So graduates, please stand one more time, turn your tassel from the right to the left as we acknowledge the class of 2020 everybody.

[Applause]

[ cheers ]

>> And finally families, supporters and friends, you were there when our students needed you the most. Graduates, please thank everyone that helped you to become a graduate of Stetson University college of law.

[Applause]

Congratulations again. After the recession has concluded we kindly ask that you meet your party and exit safely and swiftly the parking lot. We so appreciate your cooperation. Thank you all, be safe and have a wonderful rest of the weekend!

[Applause]