Jennifer Ann Keller

Good afternoon.

First, I would like to say thank you – on behalf of me, my class and this university. It is an honor to be with you today.

Now, I would like to offer you an image painted by Mary Oliver in one of her poems…

*It doesn’t have to be the blue iris, it could be weeds in a vacant lot, or a few small stones; just pay attention, then patch a few words together and don’t try to make them elaborate, this isn’t a contest but the doorway into thanks, a silence in which another voice may speak.*

I hope that I can patch a few words together today to show you how much we appreciate the gift your family has given.

Months ago, amidst the grief and the sorrow, you and your loved ones made a decision. I am sure it could not have been an easy decision, but I want you to know that in that decision you have allowed your loved one to leave a legacy. That legacy came in the form of a gift, was transferred by way of knowledge and will go on to make a difference in someone’s life. Medical schools in some parts of Asia hold a special ceremony where donors receive the title of “ajarn yai,” great teacher. This title is of highest honor and will become their name from that point on. Every one of you here can attest to the knowledge and insights that your loved ones have given you. We too received from them powerful knowledge and valuable lessons. For this, we see each one as an incredible teacher. Silent teachers, with much to give.
Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “He is a good man, who can receive a gift well.” We are most grateful for the emotional and spiritual sacrifice each of you has made, we have worked hard to treat each donor with genuine care and respect, and we will go on to pay forward this gift to each one of our future patients. We will carry our knowledge to the operating room, the emergency room, the dentist’s chair and the rehabilitation clinics and employ our understanding of the human body and how beautifully it works to better the lives of the patients we see, always remembering back to our wise teachers.

Before I go, I want take a moment again to thank you. You can’t imagine the knowledge your loved ones have taught us in silence, even after speaking their last words and breathing their last breath in this life. And because each of us students will go off on our own path to practice medicine, dentistry, physical therapy and pharmacy treating patients from all over, the entire world - without knowing it directly - is grateful.