Good morning. I add my welcome to that of Tom Groark. Today Tom is completing a five-year term as chair of the University’s Board of Regents. I hope you will join me in a round of applause for his wonderful and distinguished service to the University.

And now let’s turn the applause to those whom we are here to celebrate today: the graduates of the University of Hartford class of 2013! Please join me in a loud round of applause for this spectacular class of University of Hartford!

We all recognize that this group of students, as talented and energetic as they are, could not have done this alone. So I ask the class of 2013 to rise, turn around, and offer a warm round of applause and cheers for all of your family and friends who helped get you here today!

Today’s media reminds us almost constantly that American attitudes toward higher education are changing, and I have no doubt that at some level they are. But when I look around this tent today, and see and feel all of the joy in this space, all of the sense of accomplishment the graduates feel in having reached this point in their lives, and all of the pride that our faculty and staff, and especially all of their family and friends, have in their having reached this important point in their lives, I know there is still a great deal of value in the model of higher education we offer at the University of Hartford, a residential learning community that features close faculty-student interaction, small classes, community living environments, and a rich and varied student life.

I ask those of you who are graduating today to spend just a minute with me reflecting on your experience here for the past four—OK, maybe five—years here. Think of the friends you have made, the experiences you have had, the faculty who have changed your understanding of the world or added to what you know about the field of human endeavor you wish to follow. Remember just for a minute some experience in class that has changed you, some social occasion that has brought you joy, some person you have met here who has changed your life. This is what your college experience has been about, and it is what you should be reflecting on today.

And (oh, yes), some of you got to experience a visit by President Barack Obama to our University five weeks ago, an experience few university students in the country will ever have. These memories, whether huge public ones like President Obama’s visit, or very private ones like learning a truth that will guide your life or meeting someone who will change your life, are what a University of Hartford experience should be.

Today we celebrate that. We celebrate you for what you have accomplished, we celebrate your families for having the wisdom to send you here and supported you during your years here, and we celebrate your faculty and staff for what they have done to aid you in that journey. Today is
about the joy of human accomplishment and possibility, and it’s about celebrating the joy and value of a University of Hartford experience!

Let’s celebrate that joy and bask in it. All of us are extremely proud of you.

With that, let’s move on to the ceremony, which will consist of four parts: awarding a series of student and faculty prizes, awarding honorary doctoral degrees to four individuals whose work has changed and enlightened our world, hearing two commencement addresses—one by Bernard Cornwell, the noted author, and one by Rutger Strauss, the student speaker, and then the awarding of degrees.

Listen to all the accomplishments of the people we honor today and then celebrate your own accomplishment. It’s a day to remember and to cherish forever.