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**Eastern School of Acupuncture and Traditional Medicine Graduation**

BLOOMFIELD, NJ – The Eastern School of Acupuncture and Traditional Medicine (ESATM) held their August 2021 student graduation on the Bloomfield College campus quad located on Liberty St.

Nineteen of the thirty graduates attended, along with family and friends. Over 150 people total were in attendance, making this the largest graduation ceremony in the 24 years of ESATM history.

Students from both the Master’s of Science in Acupuncture and the Traditional Herbal Medicine certificate programs graduated. Not all students were exclusively from the class of August 2021. The impact of COVID, which was a reoccurring topic among graduation speakers also affected the ceremonial graduation of classes from December 2020, April 2021, and the upcoming graduates of December 2021, who were also in attendance.

Speakers included in the ceremony were: Aida Almanzar MBA, ESATM President and CEO; Dr. Thomas Kouo DAOM, L.Ac., Dipl.OM, ESATM Academic Dean; Dr. Lois Denmark DCOM, L.Ac., Dipl.OM, ESATM TCM Theory Department Chair (Dr. Denmark, was not in attendance, her speech was read by ESATM August 2021 graduate Stephanie Walker); Constance Frazer RN, L.Ac., ESATM Faculty Member and Clinical Supervisor; and Jessica Corrigan ESATM August 2021 graduate.

Entering the quad in their cap and gowns with their Kelly-green hoods signifying the medical field, the graduates walked to the traditional Pomp and Circumstance March, by Edward Elgar.

In her opening remarks, ESATM President, Aida Almanzar, stated that this particular class was exemplary in representing the ESATM student body, diverse in culture and in age. “This group of graduates best personifies the spirit, mission, and perseverance of the Eastern School of Acupuncture and Traditional Medicine.”, stated President Almanzar. She also reflected that fifty percent of the August 2021 student graduates’ education was during COVID, and that this experience was new to the entire community at ESATM and the world in general. “You have completed your education and graduated in historic times” added President Almanzar expressing her pride and congratulations to the attendees.

These remarks were supported by and elaborated on by the ESATM graduation speakers. Academic Dean, Dr. Thomas Kouo mentioned the importance of human contact in the acupuncture field and the student’s ability to learn in spite of the fact that the campus was closed, and students utilized telemedicine in the height of the pandemic. Student speaker Jessica Corrigan stated that if being a full-time medical master’s degree student in acupuncture and balancing children and family obligations wasn’t stressful enough, imagine having to learn a hands-on vocation remotely, in the height of COVID.

While the pandemic was a reoccurring topic at graduation, the day really belonged to the students and their families, friends, and support systems. Faculty member Constance Frazer mentioned how each student impacted her life, and how one student helped her with her hip injury after 30 years of pain. Student speaker Jessica Corrigan stated how acupuncture changed her life and how now she is going to gratefully help others. One student’s daughter sang a beautiful song of gratitude during the ceremony to the graduating class. Academic Dean, Dr. Thomas Kouo reminded graduates to “live the medicine you practice”.

As the graduates lit their ceremonial candles and banged a gong, significant to new beginnings in Chinese culture, it was clear to all attendees that this ceremony will be one to remember for a long time.

The graduates then stood as a group and led by ESATM faculty member Joseph DelGiodice, C.H., L.Ac., recited the Chinese Medicine Oath by Sun Si Miao, closing the graduation ceremony.

Congratulations to the ESATM classes of December 2020, April 2021, August 2021, and the upcoming class of December 2021.

Photo Credit Sherlley Alvarez

