



Keynote Address from Jonathan Lasch, PhD

Director of the Alfred Mann Institute
at the University of Southern California
for The Associated Students
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It's a pleasure to be here speaking with you today. I know that as biomedical engineering students you are all very smart, hard working, intellectually curious, and have a wide range of interests. So today I would like to speak broadly about your career opportunities and the impact on society, as well as talk about pragmatic and more tactical considerations for your careers.



Biomedical engineering is an area that is by its very nature cross discipline, involving engineering, math, biology, chemistry, physics, medicine, materials science, computer science, and many other areas. I myself was trained academically in biology and chemistry. Many professionals in biomedical engineering today came from other fields. And students with biomedical engineering training will be able to enter other fields, too. The career possibilities are endless for you, so you have chosen well.

You will have the opportunity to work in diverse industries, on interesting and challenging projects, and with very creative and pragmatic individuals. You will enjoy the rewards of a stimulating career, as well as the development over time of a financially secure future, in an uncertain world. We have recently inaugurated a new president, which will provide an opportunity to bring new, fresh ideas to our country and the world. But, almost 50 years ago, on January 20, 1961, at his inaugural address, President Kennedy said:

"And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – Ask what you can do for your country."

Because our world has become flatter and we are globally linked, but because man only slowly evolves, we need to ask the same question, just globally – what can you do for your world?

This is the time to pay forward to your fellow human beings, whoever they are, the debt that you owe to all of those who have helped to build our world as it is today, so that you would be able to do great things. And, you can. And, you must!

You have to use your capabilities to help the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk. You have to help the sick to heal, and you have to improve healthcare and life for everyone. It's your job now, and it's a difficult one but, it will reward you in many ways – financially, probably; intellectually, for sure; and, spiritually, of course. You need to ask yourselves, can we leave this to others only? No, you can't – you are the best and brightest – if not you, then who? But, you can't do it alone.

While you do all of this you must rely on other people to work with you, to support your dreams and vision, while you support theirs. That is why soft skills are so important. You must get along with others, in addition to applying your technical expertise. That is why you are here today, to begin to build a wonderful network of colleagues. Work hard and protect and build this network. Be honest, maintain your integrity, show kindness, be fair and you will go very far and do wonderful things with your life. Good luck and much success will be yours. Thank you. *Jonathan Lasch*