

Dear Chairman and the members of the Board of Trustees, esteemed Rector, deans, respected faculty members, cherished families, and dear friends,

On behalf of the 2023 Bachelor's-degree graduates of Istinye University, I am honored to greet all of you as the university's top-ranked pharmacist and a proud descendant and defender of the 100-year-old Republic.

We have completed a 5-year education journey, filled with both joys and sorrows, and the challenges brought by COVID. We encountered new educational and assessment models, as well as new ways of doing business that we had never known before. Concepts such as companies without any offices and remote work, which we thought would never happen, became a reality. All of this was made possible by our flexible mindset and the opportunities provided by technology. On the other hand, we managed to overcome a pandemic with fewer losses compared to the countries that are far more advanced than us in terms of technology. What made this possible was the spirit of social solidarity that we created as the whole country, primarily demonstrated by our healthcare system. No technology could have overcome such a difficult period without the human factor.

At this point, I find our presence here today very valuable. Regardless of the year, raising and educating people is still the greatest art of all time. I respectfully bow before our families on the path of raising good individuals and before all our esteemed faculty members on the path of teaching individuals who will become pharmacists, doctors, engineers, architects, and social scientists.

As the child of pharmacist parents, when the desire to contribute to human health and do it with a professional diploma alongside my amateur spirit arose within me, I was 35 years old. It had been 13 years since I received my Bachelor's degree in **Business Engineering** and 10 years since I completed my Master's degree in **Marketing Communication**. I was employed, married, and had two children, one aged 7 and the other 4. For a year, after everyone went to bed at home, I would sit in front of the computer studying YouTube videos and test books, and I achieved successful results in the university entrance exam. The founding Dean of our faculty, Prof. Dr. Abdullah Olgun, convinced me to become a part of Istinye University, and I was accepted with a 25% scholarship. In the following years, my academic success was rewarded with a 100% scholarship each year, for which I am grateful. I share this story to feel a little proud and to silence the external and internal voices that say "you can't" to the dreams you have built. If I can inspire even just one person, I will be truly happy.

I would like to express my gratitude to my esteemed dean and advisor Prof. Dr. Semra Şardaş, who provided me with her guidance and support throughout these 5 years, enabling me to publish an article in an international journal and complete my thesis, and whose vision inspires my career journey;

To the first pharmacists I have ever known and my role models, my dear parents, who have always stood behind me like a mountain;

To my friends and dear colleagues who were by my side through the challenging twists and turns of the requirements of the courses, numerous exams and assignments, and who were provided me with strength and youthful energy;

And most importantly, I would like to thank my patient spouse and children, who have waited for me to complete this process, taking the time they rightfully need from me.

Throughout your lives, may you continue to search for what you love and relentlessly pursue it, regardless of your age.

With my sincere regards.