A boisterous audience at the 106th NYCPM Commencement greeted each of the graduates who crossed the Alice Tully Hall stage with joyous applause, shouts, cheers, and occasional blasts from horns. The atmosphere was full of anticipation from the beginning and the enthusiasm grew as the ceremonies unfolded.

With Dean Lisa Lee at the podium, the faculty was led in by Peter Barbosa, PhD, President of the Faculty Council, bearing the Seifer Scepter. Next, the Class of 2017 was led into the auditorium by Dean Michael J. Trepal, now bearing the Scepter, and Student Marshal Joseph Cataldo (2018). With President and CEO Louis L. Levine now presiding, 2017 Class President Daniella Renee Menillo led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance and senior Ali M. Saleh led the singing of the Star-Spangled Banner.
Once Vice Chairman of the NYCPM Board of Trustees Gabriel Caprio welcomed the attendees and NYSPMA President William S. Pierce, DPM, shared greetings from his organization, President Levine and Mr. Caprio conferred the honorary degrees of Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa, to Benjamin B. Choi, Esq., NYCPM Trustee and prosecutor and lawyer in New Jersey; Stuart Salles, Esq., attorney who has been counsel to NYCPM for over 15 years; and Ross E. Taubman, DPM, President and Chief Medical Officer of PICA. Edward C. Halperin, MD, MA, Chancellor and CEO of New York Medical College, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa.

(Left Photo) 2017 Class President Daniella Renee Menillo, right, received The Student Service Award from Dean Lisa Lee.
(Right Photo) Edward C. Halperin, MD, MA, left, is honored by President and CEO Louis L. Levine before Halperin delivers the graduation’s keynote address.

(Left Photo) President and CEO Louis L. Levine signs the Book of Physicians at Commencement.
(Right Photo) 2017 Class Valedictorian Anaida Abagyan receives The President’s Award for Excellence in the Pre-Clinical Sciences from Dean of Pre-Clinical Sciences Eileen D. Chusid, PhD.
Dr. Halperin was also the keynote speaker. He warned the new doctors not to “treat evil as normative – don’t do things with your patients that is not in their best [health] interest.” In his wide-ranging speech, he declared that “anyone who calls a human ‘an illegal’ is guilty of evil,” and received a standing ovation at the speech’s conclusion.

Next, awards and honors were conferred upon students unaware until that morning that they had won; likewise, Mark Kosinski, DPM (’83) was surprised with the Steven Seifer Goodfellow Award, which is bestowed by fellow faculty members to a colleague “who has demonstrated exceptional contributions and service to the College.”

As the graduates strode across the stage, being hooded, receiving diplomas and signing the Book of Physicians, the friends and families of the graduates exuberantly voiced their support and love for the new doctors. Sixteen graduates were hooded by family members who are doctors themselves. After the Class of 2017 had received their diplomas, Robert A. Eckles, DPM, Dean of Graduate Medical Education, presented the three candidates for graduation from the NYCPM/Metropolitan Hospital Center residency program -- Reem Naseer Sheikh, DPM, Chief Resident 2016-2017; Hazel Merced-Vargas, DPM and Robert Jeffrey Peck, DPM – with their diplomas. Then all took the Hippocratic Oath, President Levine confirmed them as Doctors of Podiatric Medicine, and Class President Menillo and Valedictorian Anaida Abagyan delivered concluding remarks. Menillo urged the graduates to “keep your friends and classmates close” while finishing with, “I’m glad I did it … I’ll never have to do it again!”