This year, for the first time ever, the Graduate Division held its annual commencement ceremony at the Nourse Theater in San Francisco. More graduate programs have been added in recent years, and the popularity of the event has soared, so the ceremony had outgrown any space at UCSF. The lovely, historic setting of the Nourse not only provided ample room for graduates and their families, but also added a sense of importance to the always heartwarming celebration.

This year, about 150 graduate students participated in commencement, and over 800 of their family members and friends joined in the celebration. Enjoy the photos from the 2016 event above!

Commencement speaker Dr. Les Benet's address to the graduates was entitled "Nobel Prize Winners I Have Slept with and Other Tales of a Health Profession Scientist." The title was tongue in cheek, but Benet has, in fact, roomed with several Nobel laureates at scientific conferences over the years. From his remarks it was clear that Benet views research as an exciting, collaborative adventure that is most fruitful when people take the time to interact with and listen to their peers.

Coincidentally, Benet was also the recipient of the 2016 Outstanding Mentor Award, which is conferred each year by the Associated Students of the Graduate Division and the Graduate Division Alumni Association. Chelsea Hosey-Cojocari, a graduate of the Pharmaceutical Sciences and Pharmacogenomics PhD program and Benet's 55th PhD mentee, presented the award.

In her remarks, Hosey-Cojocari emphasized Benet's devotion to his students and postdocs as well as the supportive atmosphere in Benet Lab. "Les provides his students with many opportunities to develop as scientists...He has developed a culture in the laboratory that encourages open, honest discussion in an inquisitive and collaborative environment, allowing his students to feel confident asking questions. He praises good questions and ideas, yet provides honest critiques...He generously commits his time far beyond what any student can reasonably expect from their mentor," Hosey-Cojocari said.

The Graduate Division warmly congratulates all of our 2016 graduates!

(Thanks to University Relations photographer Susan Merrell and Student Financial Aid staff member Derek Tong for sharing these fantastic shots with us.)