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Senior Class Address at Commencement

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Senior Class Address at Commencement

Dominican Park

*Getting to know you this well wasn't what I intended to do
I ended up knowing plenty,
sometimes too much about you
see we came from different sides of town
different towns
different states
different coasts
different countries
even from different continents
and for four years,
we shared the same world in San Rafael
one day you probably made a sudden stop,
along Grand Ave. before it crosses Locust
because two large deer just crossed the road
with a baby deer struggling to catch up,
and another one, and another one
you admired the flutter of a hummingbird's wings,
around the Meadowlands lawn
and up above with the view of Mt. Tam,
you probably saw a hawk gliding against the wind,
in a steady place like a sticker,
on the wallpaper of a blushing sunset-kissed sky
you saw a zap of lightning in your peripherals,
while walking towards Alemany Library
realizing it was a gorgeous blue jay diving into the bushes
you probably avoided the gallery of webs displayed by spiders,
on the low branches of the trees leading up to Fanjeaux
you encountered a few hares running around,
the lawn of Edgehill mansion
and squirrel villages on the tall trees
you probably scrambled when you heard a buzzing bee,
who set out a quest to pollinate the flowers,
we now see blooming late in Spring
you met a neighborhood cat named Tim,
who hangs out near Guzman after your night classes
when night turned morning,
you probably heard the acapella chants of birds
singing gospels to the Earth
you've taken hikes around the hills and the fire trail
pondering what you would do if you saw a mountain lion
and you might've asked yourself:
was the admission to the national park included in my tuition fee?
this national park of a campus is where we have shared experiences
a park of a legacy passed down for us to walk and study in*

*the beauty of our campus is evident
but I learned that in our rush to be in time for class,
or while we're occupied with projects and personal issues,
we sometimes forget this beauty around us
because there's too much here to appreciate
I'm not just talking about nature and squirrels
I'm talking about the beauty of people
and how I discovered the little things about you:
we came from meeting each other at an icebreaker or a party
to playing Rockband and trash-talking with people in online Halo
to road tripping down to SoCal
to being housemates,
even getting evicted
we've crashed each others' couches
and shared countless laughs that we couldn't duplicate
I noticed you grow as an artist
I still remember the work you displayed in the library
we learned music together as a tight-knit group
you broke out of your shell when you performed in Soul Candy
it wasn't your time to get your Bachelor's then
with a little more traveling, experience, and struggle,
you've come back to school for your degree
and shared insights from a generation before me
you taught me that there's no shame in enrolling later
taught me that we are learners in and out of school
that we are lifelong students and teachers
you showed me what it meant to master a complex piece
watching you perform it is like you were simply going to sleep
like the art form is your bed
and all you needed to do was to sink into it
so effortless,
people don't know how much sweat you poured behind the scenes,
in order to deliver with such brilliance
you always kept it real
and though insecurities and jealousy can throw javelins,
of judgments and rumors your way,
you had a castle of confidence
positive energy like water,
flowed through the moat surrounding you
and only respect could enter your gates
because you treated everyone like a queen and a king
so you deserved to be treated the same way
you're a force of positivity and respect on our campus,
no matter what they say
when the music played,
I knew you would bring it*

*matter fact you would bring it even before the music played
because you told me that everything was dance
from our pulse, to our breath, to our walk
as a carrier of light, you're a poet of kinetics
from the flick of your finger,
the passion in your eyes,
to the tips of your toes
so in everything I do,
I've made it a point to dance with such commitment as you
I've witnessed you become a leader
we started a student association together
created events that became new Dominican traditions
built a family through our need to rediscover our cultural heritage
you were an RA, in ASDU
you took initiative when many just complained
we opened up to each other in LeaderShape
discussed philosophy, politics, covered stories
and shared our writings with each other
we studied abroad together
and became lost in a new world
we seized the spirit of our new places traveled
and wished we could bring it all home
from then,
we were homesick between multiple places
you told me about your stories from NCUR
the researches you conducted
the labs you interned for
and how meaningful your work has become for you
your life was fulfilled when you opened up a child's confidence
when you taught someone how to walk again
when you cured another of their maladies,
with medications, therapy and noble intentions
when you made relationships in the office,
the classroom, the hospital, the field
when your patient held on to you until their last breath of life,
as they finally rested their eyes thankful,
to know that you were with them,
until the end
I would often come across,
the oh so glorious smell of your sweaty lacrosse gear,
on my way to open-gym
you told me about your sports tournaments in Hawaii
representing the Penguins
the toughest, most rugged mascot in the NCAA
ok well maybe not rugged,
but the coolest*

*you told me how much it meant for you to work as a nurse in Uganda
to acknowledge the privilege you've been granted here
and apply your work where it matters the most
in places where each drop of water is a diamond
where poverty and smiles coexist
where the little things are celebrated
where a few minutes, a few cents,
just a bit more love and care,
saved a life
and you wondered why our human greed has denied others of this
that their simple needs are sacrificed
by our first-world indulgence for luxury and extravagance
we've seen each other wear multiple uniforms and hats
witnessed each others' success
as well as mistakes
we spent all-nighters together
because ninety-percent of the time,
we didn't pace our selves well enough to sleep right
our cram of studies included countless Jack-in-the-Box runs
even Sol Food, if we had the money to spend
but in the end, we got it together
hence why we're here
we had differences,
and lost friendships
and when it comes to the problems of the world,
with poverty, social and political injustices,
war and the damages on our environment,
everyone has their own way of seeing things,
with opinions on how these things are to be addressed
but each day,
with our differences of where we're from,
we saw how much we had in common in this Dominican park
where we sometimes shared fourteen meals together in a week
with a chance to say hi to each other at least thrice in one day
and knew each other on a first-name basis
or by nicknames and inside jokes
we saw each other as human beings like our selves
no matter how distant our upbringing, how varying our personality,
how clear the color line, how established the gender role,
how imbalanced the class, how long the generation gap,
how conflicting the belief, and how alienating the culture
getting to know you this well wasn't what I intended to do
but being with you throughout college was the greatest experience,
I could ask for
I learned about you in profound ways
there is much more about you than I first thought*

*and you taught me much about my self,
beyond the superficial armor I chose to wear coming in
and this is what makes our experience special
an eye-opening experience that many people may never have
an eye-opening experience that reminds us to keep our eyes open
because life is so large and complex,
our bubble of a world in this park is the tip of the iceberg
so as Penguins, let's swim
and march to new lands
like the Dominican Sisters who wore Habits
and chartered this college,
with merely a vision,
commitment to serve,
scarce resources,
and the ability to bake delicious cookies
one person who comes from a different world is merely a portal,
to what else we're missing
before we explore these portals,
we can't miss out on due recognition:
let us thank our wonderful administration,
and the legacy that the Dominican Sisters have left us,
for having a vision that we were nurtured in
let us thank our faculty:
from the school of Business and Leadership
Education and Counseling Psychology
Health and Natural Sciences
my school - Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Service-Learning, the Pathways programs and all other programs
we can all go on about our favorite professors
I have many great things to say about them,
except it would be unfair for me to do so if only I could share
let's thank the office of Student Life, Campus Ministry,
our career and internship offices,
and alumni relations
for bringing our Dominican experiences full-circle
by sharing Dominican traditions, staying true to its ideals,
keeping us bonded and included in the community
let's thank them in advance,
as they keep us connected to our Alma Mater
and help determine our future paths
let's thank the great workers, the staff and facilities crews
who do the work we take for granted
they prepare to work at dusk, in the night, and at dawn
so that we can study and enjoy this place during the day
last but not least, let's thank our families
our mothers (hi Mom!), our fathers, our parental figures,*

*our children, our siblings, our best friends, our relatives,
our mentors, our community from our hometown
through the ups and downs,
we can't count how many times they've been there for us
they're the most meaningful relationship we will ever have
let's remember all that we have here
close your eyes
take a deep breath and inhale all the life you can
exhale a future of endless possibilities
feel the touch of the souls of your loved ones
those who are here and those who are far away
open your eyes
look at the sky and remember the dreams,
of our loved ones who have passed away
right now I'm thinking about my Pops
this prayer is dedicated to them
to Jordan Fromm
to Beto Hernandez
to Johnathan Maloney, his wife, their two children,
and Steven Culbertson
may our work come to life
through the seeds of their souls and dreams
as they rest in power within our hearts
pumping life to the palms of our hands,
and the arches of our feet
yes, our life's work leads to endless possibilities
I'm looking forward to a time when I call you,
about your research and the work you did
to ask if you are interested on collaborating on a project
if you want to start a business with me
if I could send my niece and nephew to your clinic
or your school
when I could ask about our reunion
or if we could simply hang out,
get a few drinks and some crack jokes
let's stay in touch
because truly,
all we have at the end of the day is our vision,
our story,
and each other
may the world be our Dominican park
where we learn in similar ways as we did here
may we bring souvenirs from our travels
back to our communities
may we be humbled in awe of how great life is,
how little we actually are*

*yet how much difference our work can make for others' lives
may our senses be F-R-E-E free,
Forever Reborn Eyes and Ears
may we be the ethical leaders and responsible global citizens,
we were set out to be
may we end the wars in the Middle East,
reinvest on healthcare and education,
heal our environment with conservation,
and sustainable practices
may we recognize workers' equity,
and peoples' rights around the world
often times we forget,
that even Jesus of Nazareth was among the poor and oppressed
so let's pay attention to other people
and reconstruct our world economy
which relies on child labor,
the prostitution of women and the poor in the third world,
deforestation and toxic disposal
I ask all of us to be the solution
by picking one battle,
and fighting with our ethics and with purpose
I'll end by sharing with you a challenge I tell myself:
I want you to die, as many times as necessary
to rekindle the yearning of a new born baby
I want you to fly, suspicious mysterious and scary
like an alien denied of their humanity
I want you to be the dusk that welcomes the dark
so we'll open our eyes when we're tryna act smart
be a typhoon, nature's protective arm
to clear the fires of war that they're tryna start
I'd prefer your ship sunk under a sea of harsh tests
than see you remain in an island of regret
do not believe in ghosts who wander after death
do your best and die peacefully in your last quest
practice the theory that you study to serve
may community save you when you fall to your worst
may you reflect on these words, the process never ends
your spirit committed to progress, forever will stand
Cheers, class of 2012. Let's rock the world.*

May 12, 2012