

Good morning family, friends, esteemed faculty and staff, our lovely speakers, and of course, the class of 2017. Congratulations.

I am honored to be the class president of such a lively group of students and thank you for giving me this opportunity. I would first like to acknowledge the other members of senior class council: Yianni, Bernice, Jonathan, thank you for all of your hard work and dedication. I could not have asked for a better team.

As class president, there are moments that I am authorized to speak on behalf of the entire class. This is one of those moments.

With sincere grace, we thank Skidmore College. For the past four years, the administration, staff, and faculty at Skidmore have provided world-class experiences that we will always treasure. This community will always be dear to each one of us.

And we thank our families: brothers and sisters, grandparents, and parents. Thank you for your support. And Mom and dad – please don't rush to judge – give us a few years before you decide if the investment in your Thoroughbred paid off.

Finally, we thank each of you in attendance for joining us today to celebrate our four years at Skidmore and the many years leading up to this. Today is a day of celebration, accomplishment, and opportunity.

This past September, I was invited to the first-year's convocation. As a senior, I sat in the back of the room and listened to President Glotzbach, along with many other charismatic leaders address the first-years and introduce them to Skidmore. And I must say – it was a throwback.

And many of us can probably remember our own convocation. The hot day, standing out on the bleachers – in the rain – for way to long – to take that picture; and then slowly filing into the gym listening to the all-too-soothing sounds of the bagpipes. As we entered the gym we could look to our left and see our parents and guardians, swelling with pride excited to send us off on this new journey.

Compared to the convocation we shared three and half years ago this year's convocation was a very different experience for me. Everything was about the start of something new – but I sat there reflecting on my past three years here at Skidmore, asking if I've done enough. As Wes Moore so eloquently wrote: "When it is time for you to leave this school, leave your job, or even leave this earth, you make sure you have worked hard to make sure it mattered you were even here."

President Glotzbach told the first-years to look at the people around them and know that these will be the people they make lasting connections with. I looked to my right and saw my freshmen year roommate. Three years ago I had only known her for a few hours but this September, when I looked at her – wonderful memories

filled my thoughts. And I think that's what the college experience is about. And I think that's how we can measure our time here. Of course we learned in the classroom, but the connections with people make it all worthwhile. Relationships make us stronger, richer, and more complete. We should all take Oprah's advice – probably about everything – but in particular when she said “Surround yourself with only people who are going to lift you higher.” It's true; relationships matter.

At Skidmore we have made resilient, relevant relationships. And we will treasure them – always. Although we may not always agree on all the same things, for example I don't have the same affinity for the vegetable broccoli as some of my fellow classmates do, we still work to understand each other. We share our ideas, we challenge each other, and when it all comes down to it, we are there for each other.

It's about that ... and 1:00am runs to SPA for chicken fingers and fries; it's about staying up all night in Case during finals week with many other students struggling to finish our papers and presentations; it's about walking down Broadway and standing in line in the freezing cold for hours for a \$1 samples of chowder. Skidmore is also about these experiences that we have shared.

We have a tendency to define our success by the accomplishments we've made. We think that this gives us something tangible to rank ourselves – but Skidmore has shown us that there is much more than the awards, titles, and certificates.

During finals week, I was stressed out of my mind, as many of us probably were. And as I was walking down Case walkway reviewing my mental to-do list, suddenly someone called out, “Madison,” I turned around and she gave me a simple yet very supportive, “You're awesome. You got this.” I didn't think I was being outwardly expressive so it meant a lot that someone could tell what I was feeling. That moment stuck with the rest of the day. It gave me that little bit of extra energy to keep me going. And that's what the Skidmore community brings: a sense of camaraderie and support. Before I got to Skidmore I never imagined that this Utopia would be my community. I used to think I had to do everything myself, but once I got here, I realized that people are so willing to help, share their knowledge, and reach out in a time of need. I love Skidmore.

We are Skidmore. We will proudly wear the name Skidmore. And we are forever the graduating Class of 2017. Thank you for an amazing four years. Stay connected and I will see you all at reunion, but hopefully sooner.

Thank you.