

Commencement Remarks

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Good morning family and friends, good morning faculty and staff, and last, but most certainly not least, **good morning Class of 2014!** We made it! We made it through a long four years and we made it through a particularly rough year.

The Skidmore community was tested this year. We lost Alma Becker and David Yergan from the theatre department, Kathleen (also known as Kate) Dudley-Perry in the office of Opportunity Programs, and we as a class have a host of loved ones that could not be physically present for today's ceremony. I, myself, lost my grandmother, Irma Jean Buttram. However, we will not pause for "a moment of silence" because today we have gathered at SPAC, to not only celebrate our accomplishments, but we are here to reflect and celebrate those who put us on this path. We are standing on the shoulders of giants. So Alma, Kate, Dave, Mema (grandmother), and every one else watching today- this one's for you.

If this speech had a title, which it does not, it would simply be entitled "Thank you." Alongside these thanks, I feel it is appropriate to provide a summary of what we have learned within our past four years at Skidmore.

The first thank you goes to the liberal arts. Thank you for attracting 750ish scholars, artist, activist, and problem solvers from all over the world and cultivating our desire to learn. Thank you transforming us into responsible citizens: citizens that can host cocktail parties as well as devote our time and efforts to orphanages in Asia, citizens that wish to protect the one home that can sustain human life, and citizens that wish to teach future generations how to be responsible citizens.

Thank you to our professors, of whose shenanigans over the past four years we are still trying to recover from. Thank you for your willingness to teach us and push us, sometimes to our breaking point, to the next level of excellence. It is from you that we've learned that creative thought truly does matter. Not only did you teach us the profitable skill of thinking critically but you have contributed to our creativity more than you will ever know. (How we actually made you believe that we did the 700-page reading that was assigned the night before it was due, I will never know.) But on the behalf of the entire Senior Class, thank you for that skill and I promise we will be using it for years to come.

Lastly, thank you class of 2014. We have taught each other more about the world and more about life than we ever could have learned in any classroom setting. Most

of us started this journey four years ago, unsure of ourselves, and not knowing the paths we that would take to make us the people who we are today. Class of 2014: You've helped me find my.

Seniors, will you do me a favor and turn to your right and your left and "say thank you for helping me find my way"?

As I look out at your beautiful shining faces, I see my own reflected back at me. We have collectively played a large part in shaping each other's learning experiences. Whether it's the skills you've displayed on the court, on the field, or in the pool (my best friend is a swimmer), your research and thesis work on hydraulic fracturing, producing and starring in your own web series, or being a fabulously talented seamstress, when you bring 700-plus brilliantly talented people together you are bound to learn a little something about a lot of things. Bigger doesn't always mean better but I think we can all agree that admissions got it right with the class of 2014. You, my dear friends, are teachers as well as students and together we are the liberal arts experience.

Like the dying man once said "it had to end sometime," and I can acknowledge that I am reaching the end of this speech and we are reaching the end of our Skidmore careers as students. Thank you, cCass of 2014. for the past four years and thank you, most of all, for the memories.

I will now leave you in the words of another giant we lost during our time here at Skidmore and on whose shoulders we all stand. In the blockbuster film, *The Bodyguard*, the late great Whitney Houston sings these words: "I hope that life treats you kind, and I hope you have all you dream of, and I wish for you joy and happiness, but above all this I wish you love." Class of 2014, I wish you love: I wish that you love yourselves, I wish you love others, those who cross your path and those whom you will never meet, and lastly I wish that you continue to love learning. For the foundation of the liberal arts education is love. I charge you to continue to learn all you can, lean into discomfort, and challenge yourselves. Become stronger in your responsible citizenship and we can change the world for the better.

Poverty, hatred, destruction of our natural environment, fashion disasters, issues of the world, and other plights that plague human existence: Ready or not here we come. Congratulations, Class of 2014, and I will always love you.