

SKIDMORE COMMENCEMENT REMARKS

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Good morning, everyone! I'd like to start off by saying how grateful I am to be able to stand up here in front of you all today. I can't believe it's already been four years; it feels like just yesterday we were all running from the Sports Center in the pouring rain after Convocation, not really sure where to go. But looking at everyone sitting here, I think it's safe to say that we found our way.

At the start of freshman year I found myself sitting in my Scribner Seminar, "American Liberty," with Professor Breslin (he loves when people call him that) going around the room asking us about our schedules for the semester. When he got to me, I asked him if it was a bad idea to only have classes on Tuesday–Thursday with a four-day weekend. Beau (that's what he actually likes to be called) responded with one question. He said, "Well, that depends. Are you a self-starter?" I absolutely panicked and, of course, I said I was, immediately realizing that that was the wrong answer. At the time, I was not a self-starter, and not many freshmen are. We were too busy being excited about living away from home, meeting new people, and experiencing new things that we forgot that our parents were no longer there to tell us to start our work or that it was probably time to do our laundry. Yes, they still managed to do that over the phone, but let me tell you, it's very easy to put the phone down while you're telling us what to do...or so I've heard.

Fast-forward to senior year. Through all of the people we've met, the 300-level classes we've taken, and the accomplishments we've made, I look out onto this crowd and I see a group of students that have grown into self-starters. I see some of the strongest voices with the most ambitious dreams waiting to go out into the world and put our Skidmore education to the test.

As such a strong graduating class, we can't forget to give credit to the people that helped us get here. It wouldn't be fair for me to thank all of you here today by myself, so let's do this as a class. I'm going to count to three and we're going to say "thank you" to all of our parents, family members, friends, and professors that have helped us through the ups and downs of growing up and never complaining about having to do so. Okay, so, one, two, three: "Thank you!" Thank you all for investing your time, effort, and money to get us here today.

To my class: I may not have gotten to know all of you as well as I would have liked, but the people I did made my time here worthwhile. I see a crowd of students full of potential to take the idea that creative thought matters and share it outside of our community. I'm excited to see the accomplishments you all make as individuals. However, to say that we will uncover our potential after graduation does not give enough credit to everything students have accomplished during the past four years. Our grade is filled with scientists, activists, teachers, artists, and so much more. Skidmore has given us the tools to follow our passions, and now it's time for us to continue to show Skidmore what we can do.

Although I'd love to spend four more years here, it's not our time to be at Skidmore anymore. As I heard one professor recently say, the word *commencement* means the beginning. Throughout our four years, we've made some lifelong friends and we've had some life-changing experiences. Although we're leaving Skidmore, these are memories that won't leave us. We'll be able to look back and laugh about the all-nighters we pulled and the group projects that Skidmore faculty love to assign. We'll smile at the memories of the clubs and groups we joined and the extracurricular activities that helped us meet our best

friends. We'll reminisce about chicken-finger Friday, graduating from twin-XL to full-sized beds, and that one semester that we spent less than \$50 on textbooks. We'll all feel a bit nostalgic when someone Snapchats a picture of a doughboy or the first day the weather gets above 70 degrees. Some of us will be back to visit next semester, others at our five-year reunion, but regardless, we will always carry a part of Skidmore with us.

So today I challenge you all to be self-starters in everything you do. Take your ambition and use it to create something new. Let's make a commitment to *make* the change that we spent the last four years in our classes talking about. Let's embrace our potential as individuals and help others in ways people didn't think we could. However, it is just as important for us to stay connected with each other. Remember that although we may not physically be together on the same campus, if you look around the room at the people graduating today, they're the ones who will be changing the world with you.

It took me a bit of time to find a quote that I wanted to leave you all with that captured the message I'm trying to convey. But then I found a quote by Mahatma Gandhi that read, "A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history." To the Class of 2015: we are that small body, ready to make the change we know is possible.

Thank you for an amazing four years, and I can't wait to see how you all alter the course of history!