

Good evening President Groener, Trustees, Regents, Faculty, Staff, and Visiting Family and Friends, and good evening to the graduating Class of 2018! Congratulations, we did it!

I am deeply humbled and honored to have the opportunity to speak to you today and share this beautiful commencement with such an amazing group of hard working individuals. Our class has gone through a lot of changes throughout our four years from seeing classmates come and go, going through transitions of new faculty and staff, presidents, and even new cooks in the kitchen. We have watched our campus go through landscaping transition, seeing some of our favorite coaches come and go, and even at one time having Berkeley students living on campus with us. With all those changes, we have adapted and made this place our own. Something made us stay and stick around and I would say it has paid off because look where we are now... in a few moments, well maybe in half an hour, we will be receiving our diploma covers... the diplomas will be shipped to our billing address in 2-3 months.

Looking back at my freshman year I was almost one of those classmates that did not come back. Like you I made great friends, had fun adventurous nights that resulted in late night food runs to Jack in the Box because that was the cheapest and closest thing around, or driving through the Oakland Hills to find the best view of the bay. Some nights included hiding from the RA's or staying up till 2 am in the morning playing Uno in our common lounge. I joined different clubs and enrolled in the Spiritual and Social Justice class with Sister Sophia Park, where she has prepared countless groups of students to go to Tutwiler, Mississippi. During our Spring break, we partnered with Habitat for Humanity and helped build a house for a community in need. Even with all those great experiences the thing that brought me here, cross-country, was not what I expected. In high school, I lived and breathed cross-country it was my pride and joy. For many of you, athletics, high school successes, careers or passions are what got you here. Coming from a program that made such an impact on my life I struggled with realizing that life was not all about running, but so much more. If I wanted to get the full experience of college and apply myself, I had to take myself out of the comfort zone of being an athlete. Rather I used what I learned from cross-country and challenged myself. I realized that those amazing life-changing moments that happen to us, happen when they do for a reason and we cannot expect to get a life changing experience every time we try something new, but that they will happen organically.

So, I decided to stay at HNU and I came back with a different mindset that made me dig a little deeper to be a woman who was hungry for new challenges and experiences. I did my best in my running with the help of my teammates and coaches, I became part of the Campus Ministry Team where I encountered Father Sal and Jenny Girard Malley and their spunky personalities, I was a peer mentor for incoming freshmen, I was blessed with the opportunity to study abroad on the Rome Prize trip, I even tried working with the IT department and let's just say I learned a lot, but computers are not for me. I even had the honor of working with the Campus legends, Luis, Kristin Campos, and my beloved friends Fredy Trujillo and David Mejia in Campus Services who are the ones who work behind the scene to make HNU run smoothly. I had the opportunity to be part of WrestleMania for the past four years and this year we raised \$5,560 and were able to grant a wish for a child in Alameda! I eventually became an RA and this job was not easy, lots of late nights and tough situations and dealing with residents who were now hiding from me when we walked around the halls. Being an RA gave me a family that supported me in everything I did, and mentors and friends I will cherish forever. I even performed in *The Vagina Monologues*, a play that raises awareness about the violence that women and girls still face all over the world. This play encourages us not to be afraid to speak our minds even though our voices shake, because in our current world the need for our voices is more important than ever.

Throughout our time here, I have learned that it is not always about the resources that are provided, but more how resourceful we are. The ultimate resources are those within each of us: creativity, honesty, sincerity, love, passion, and decisiveness. If we engage in our own resourcefulness, then we are our strongest resource! We all have our own definition of success and accomplishments, so do not measure your success by someone else's. Measure your success by YOUR hard work, the things or people that make YOU happy or the impact YOU have made on others, or better yet the impact others have made on you. Your own success should be something that makes you proud to be YOU!

After this ceremony and celebration with your family and friends is over, after you have taken off your gown, and those fancy shoes that have been killing you all day, what remains is YOU! You can strip away all the outer appearance, the awards, the make-up, the diploma. But no one can strip away the knowledge that you have learned and experiences you have had. Those things are in here (point to brain) and here (heart) and they will go with you wherever you go. It is your job to apply your knowledge and experiences and share them with those around you.

I challenge you my friends to find a dream or passion that drives you to be the best you and go after it. Go on spontaneous adventures, travel the world and try new things that make you go out of your comfort zone. Do not forget to love yourself and surround yourself with friends who get you, make you laugh, and push you to work harder than you did yesterday. Appreciate your family and loved ones who have been there with you through the good and bad and do not forget to let them know how much you love them. Reminisce on the memories and friends you have made here, like late night conversations where you fell apart and your friends put you back together, having the ability to walk down the hall and visit your best friends because you missed them, or waking up at the crack of dawn for practice with your teammates and then rushing back to the Public Market before it closed to get the last bit of omelet. Then having Mrs. Clara scold, you if you ate anything inside the kitchen or you forgot to swipe your student ID card. Or passing by Justin Vacca's office who always had to his door open and who never forgot your name and couldn't be mad at you for more than a day.

And those stairs you can't forget our HNU stairs that we all dread so much. Those stairs that we walked up four years ago and today we walked down. Believe it or not, those stairs have a stronger message than we think. Those stairs made you put in a little work and effort even when you were tired and worn out, but it made that view of the bay so much better. I want you all to remember that the view is always beautiful when you reach the top of a big mountain, but you must remember to go back down and bring others with you. Just because you made your own path to success does not mean you can't make your path a trail for others to follow. Congratulations, Class of 2018. I wish you the best and keep blazing those trails!