

History Has Its Eyes On You

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Hello, everyone! I would like to take a moment to welcome and thank all of the friends and family members here today; the Board of Trustees; President Stuebner and all of the faculty and staff. I would also like to thank Leslie Campbell, Ann Page Stecker, Eric Boyer and Kate Seamans for their wonderful guidance and enthusiasm. **And, most importantly, welcome to the Class of 2018!**

Standing here as the representative of our class, I am expected to offer you all the secrets to a successful life, words of wisdom, insights to true happiness, and basically tell you what really matters or what you should dedicate your life to. Right ... no pressure! The truth is, I am not going to be able to provide the answers to all of life's greatest questions in a five-minute speech, sorry to disappoint! Instead, let's talk about where we stand in the world and where we hope to go.

Up until this moment, we have been watched. Up until this moment, we have lived in a highly structured environment. We have been raised by family, guided by the education system, and been taught what is right and what is wrong by our parents and teachers. Up until this moment, we have been held to set expectations and standards of success, **cradled by watchful eyes and guiding principles.**

We, as a class, are incredibly grateful and thankful for all of the hard work you, our families, educators and communities, have put into raising and nurturing us. However, there is a huge disconnect in the perception of how we Millennials are generations just don't get us. Even the name Millennials sparks a reaction – don't think I didn't see those eye rolls in the back, **Gen Xers and Baby Boomers!**

When you hear people talking about Millennials, you will often hear comments like:

- We're selfish and have no respect for our elders.
- We're lazy and on our phones all the time – we care more about Snapchatting than finding a job.
- We're unmotivated and entitled, and we love to spend our parents' money.
- And we really, really like avocados and selfies.

Alright, that last one might be true. But those are some fairly disconcerting generalizations, right? Because we Millennials have a lot of good things going for us, too:

- We are on track to be the most educated generation in United States history.
- We're the country's largest and most diverse generation.
- We care about the state of the world and making a difference.
- And by 2025, we will account for 75 percent of the global workforce.

As our undergraduate lives come to a close, these seemingly insurmountable disconnects between perception and reality that our generation faces **have been on repeat in my mind**. A lyric from Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton* has been my mantra as I contemplate these challenges; in the play, as George Washington speaks to Alexander Hamilton about the abysmal odds they face in winning the Revolutionary War, he tells Hamilton that, "**History has its eyes on you.**" There are many factors in life that are beyond our control; our individual actions are not among them.

It may not seem like it now, but over the past four years, history has been watching us. The good news? We are already doing incredible things. We have created memories that will last a lifetime, memories that we'll share with friends and family years from now. We'll talk about finding lifelong friends that made us laugh so hard we felt like we couldn't breathe, or that time we rode Victor the Charger while Campus Safety wasn't watching (sorry...not sorry). We'll talk about

the long, sleepless nights of work to complete our Capstones, and the equally long, sleepless nights at the Goose trying to recover from Capstone.

We have also contributed to the history of the school – look at all that we have done, individually and collectively, to contribute to Colby-Sawyer! We have set and broken athletic records; started clubs and organizations that make a difference in our community, and spurred change on this campus when we saw room for improvement.

Through each and every one of our actions, big and small, we have contributed to our own histories as well as the history and success of this school, our soon-to-be alma mater. Now it is time to continue to build our legacy in this next phase of life; history will *always* have its eyes on you.

As we leave our undergraduate careers, it is easy to become overwhelmed with the pressures and hardships of life. Especially as it becomes more apparent that there are no more watchful, guiding figures over you anymore dictating your choices and actions, telling you what is right and wrong. While our friends, families, and coworkers will always offer advice if asked – and sometimes even if we don't – from now on, we'll operate on a different level of independence. Just as this nation rose from turmoil and polar-opposite opinions, we as a generation will also overcome the world's disparities and ascend to celebrate each other's differences. Taking sides is easy. Stepping into another person's shoes is harder (Hint: pushing yourself to understand another person's perspective is a good move!).

I won't pretend to have all the answers, but I will say this: **History has its eyes on you – on us.** We stand at the precipice of the rest of our lives. Our histories, our legacies, are ours to create. We'll go out into the world and make mistakes, but failure is just a part of life; we have to accept and learn from our missteps. We'll find passions, lose them and then find others. We only have one life to live – let's not waste it trying to be anyone else except ourselves. Keep all the values and morals that our mentors at Colby-Sawyer, friends and family instilled, and let's go make a difference in the world.

History has its eyes on you. Your legacy has its eyes on you. The future has its eyes on you. And I can't wait to see all of you avocado-loving, selfie-taking, "entitled" Millennials show it who's boss. Thank you, and congratulations to the Class of 2018! We did it!