

Hi, hello. I hope everyone's having a good day (despite the weather) 😊

So I've spent some time laboring over this speech and what to say. I was busy with school, and got a call saying essentially, y'know, congratulations on all your hard work. As a reward, here's a little bit more work.

Of course as a STEM student, I did some research. I polled my friends for as many cheesy suggestions as possible -- so that I would be prepared to stand here and explain a horribly convoluted metaphor about how college is like a living cell, or tell cringey jokes about fungi. Perhaps tell a personal anecdote about how the lights in the animal care facility rooms are on timers because I was once feeding scallops to very tiny, very adorable octopuses --they're about the size of a fingernail--when suddenly it was pitch black and I had to finish feeding them, and also make sure they weren't trying to escape, all with one foot wedged in the door to let in a sliver of light. Because apparently one whole degree later and I still haven't learned how to find light switches.

But I think my favorite suggestion was that I just stand up here and say fun words at you for five minutes. Words like pernicious or oxaliplatin. Now, this was my favorite not just because it sounds pretty ridiculous to turn graduation, a biology graduation mind you, into my personal, very poor imitation of a spelling bee, but also because it's a good suggestion. Because there's a lot of fun words that can describe this graduating class. So, I wanted to make sure everyone here knows that you graduates are:

Cognizant. And knowledgeable. You have worked through countless classes exploring current problems and science to become not only well informed but prepared to tackle biological problems both big and small.

You are synergistic! Which perhaps is a term you've heard in the what-seems-like-countless chemistry classes we've struggled through. Throughout research and lab classes and weird zoom breakout rooms(?) you have learned how to work together, collectively problem solve, and communicate effectively.

And you are also effervescent, which essentially means that you are all enthusiastic and hopefully, high-spirited. Because college is a fantastic time to just be excited to try new things, whether it's making new friends, starting hobbies, or joining clubs. Not to mention, we'll all have exciting plans for the future, whether they've solidified yet or not.

[Pause]

And we have all grown into these descriptions over the past few years because ultimately college, I think, is a time for growth. It's a time for learning new skills and subjects. For learning, perhaps, how to live on your own for the first time and how to be kind to yourself (both of which might involve eating ice cream out of the tub at one in the morning, I speak from personal experience). It's a time for learning other people's experiences and who exactly YOU want to be.

[Pause]

In more ways than one, college is a time to learn what's important.

[Pause]

As we graduate and transition into new periods of our lives, I hope we all continue to discover important things. So, take that kickboxing class you always wanted to try. Learn how to maintain a work-life balance. Write to legislators and volunteer at nonprofits. Fix global warming! Do the work necessary to protect important things, whether they're personal, societal, or global.

So with that, I'd like to congratulate the graduating biology class of 2022 on their hard work at growing, and I wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavors to save lives and to save planets. Thank you.