

Hypothetical Commemoration and Commencement Style Speech

Intro to Public Speaking

Purpose of speech: To advocate for “free college”

SPEAK SLOWLY!

This speech is given in a hypothetical scenario in which I'm a student graduating in 2054 after college was made free of charge to me and my class.

Good evening Appalachian State. Faculty, Families, My family-my parents who are finally seeing their North Carolinian dream school, I hope you have lived vicariously through my opportunities, I love you very much. And of course good evening and congratulations to the friends who have **become** my family- sitting in front of me here, give it up for the Class of 2054.

Tonight I would like to explain to you all just how lucky I feel to be standing here today, and how lucky we should all feel to be sitting in the App State Holmes Convocation center. I am so thankful to have been elected as this class's Valedictorian, but I want you to see today not just how my life has changed, but how all of ours have.

Standing on this podium, with this rather heavy medal on my neck, it feels unreal when I think back to how I felt on the first day of freshman year standing on my new dorm floor with all those heavy bags in my hands. I've always trusted in my parents, and thought that anything they could do I could do myself with their guidance, but when they hugged me goodbye with tears of joy in their eyes I knew that college was not something they could pass advice to me with. They never had the opportunity to go. I remind you, that 20 some years ago, college was an **extremely costly** venture, and if you were to ask your high school classmates how many of them were actually even going to college, depending on your high school you'd get a lot of “I'd love to, but I can't afford it. Good luck to you though, because I'm sure it is an amazing opportunity.”

Thirty-two years ago on the coast,

In Wilmington North Carolina

Do we have anyone in the crowd from Wilmington?

My father graduated high school at John T. Hoggard. No, he wasn't a highschool Valedictorian- but I love you dad!

Still, he was a hard, hard-working student who I've learned many of my study habits from.

I wish he grew up in today's world where college is so accessible to us because—

He unfortunately, despite being a far better high school student than myself, could not attend college.

Years ago, my mother made a speech about how she wished that college would be more accessible to students on local, state, and federal levels, and here we all are. She had an opportunity to inspire change, and I believe she did.

You'll keep hearing me say this word- i'm going to wear it out- OPPORTUNITY.

My key takeaway from college is simply that when you're given an opportunity, and are familiar with what that opportunity means, you seize it. And not just seize it, but appreciate it, value it, and strive to do the honor justice by being the best you can be. My father never had an opportunity like this one, but he managed to go places. It's inspiring to think about how much further I can reach with such a great opportunity placed into my hands.

When you see an open door, run through it.

But actually- don't just run through it, **walk** through it.

Take **time** to appreciate that new room you're stepping into. It may be a silly analogy but I mean it. And when you get into that room:

Brighten it, repaint it, make **change**. Make it an even better room.

The room is your life by the way. If you didn't catch that.

I stand here, you sit here, with four years under our belt, which were made perfectly accessible to us. For me, it was four years of brand new experience- academic experience yes, but also life experience. College taught me how to work harder than I ever knew I could work, type faster than I ever knew I could type, laugh harder than I ever knew I could laugh,

and occasionally sob harder than I knew I could sob and in places I didn't know I'd ever sob but that *is* valuable life experience as well by the way.

I can go through all the basics, which we've already learned along the way. I've learned to use my resources in college, which I will continue to seek in my professional life. I've learned time management- I have pumped out some killer essays in the matter of the last two or three hours before a deadline but, I don't recommend it- it hurts your sleep schedule. Don't procrastinate.

I've learned to ask for help along the way.

-That's an important one. But..

To be frank with you, I don't have a road map to success. All I know is that I've worked my hardest and seized every moment which was given to me here. I don't hold any secrets that helped me pass my classes and earn this title so I'm not going to give you any step by step instructions because I'm not better than any of you.

At the end of the night we all are leaving with a new slate of opportunity. My personal plan has been and is to take my degree and use it to advocate for more students to be able to simply

come here and experience what we just experienced. With my degree in political science I wish to make college even more accessible to today's youth.

Recognizing that it's still relatively new that this many of us are able to attend four years of higher education, I encourage you all to continue to seize your day, and to make change throughout your life. Change was made to get us here, give us opportunities, and aside from just education, on even broader terms, change must be made for every advancement of our society.

So go forth, seize the day, and bring change.

Fellow students, just think of the great places we'll go, keeping this legacy of the educated youth alive.

Thank you class.