

Topsheet:

Multicultural Graduation Reception

Multicultural Student Affairs

May 4, 2017

Pierson Auditorium

Requested Arrival: 5:55 p.m.

Speech start time: 6:10 p.m.

5 min Welcome

Audience: students, family, staff, faculty, alumni,

Talking points:

- Welcome attendees
- Congratulate 2017 grads
- Recognize the academic success of our students of color and the impact of their successful completion of an undergraduate degree program
- Words of encouragement for the graduates as they transition into the workplace

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Good evening, everyone. It is a pleasure to be here to welcome you, and congratulate our 2017 graduates.

From your first day on campus until now, you have pursued the journey toward graduation. I cannot express how proud I am to see each of you obtain your undergraduate degrees, and I am confident that you will go on to accomplish many great things.

I want to briefly touch on the significance of this moment. When I grew up, opportunities for people of color were limited, and even more so for the pursuit of higher education. However, even I had an opportunity that my parents did not have. And you have even more opportunities available to you than I had when I was your age. That is proof of progress, yes. But we still have a long way to go.

You are both the product of a centuries-long fight; and participants in an ongoing struggle. You see, the odds were against you. Statistically speaking, many of you were not expected to make it. But you persevered, and you triumphed. You faced your critics, overcame your obstacles, and showed the world that you are people going places.

Now, I'll give you one last homework assignment. Your homework is to use this moment to encourage youth in your communities to pursue higher education. Be an example for them. Show them they are more than just

capable of attending college; that they are capable of graduating and achieving their dreams.

There are numerous degree programs represented this evening, and that speaks to the wide array of talent you possess. I know that you will use that talent to change the world.

When you take that walk across the stage next week, you are embarking on an ever-lasting journey; a journey you have prepared for, and are ready to conquer. You will be a part of a Roo network that is more than 120,000 strong. That network will be there to support you on your journey - to encourage you, to guide you, and to help build you up. I can also assure you that Provost Bichelmeyer and myself, and all of the faculty and staff who helped get you to this point, will be here cheering you on. Remember, no matter how far you go, this will always be home.

Congratulations to the Class of 2017, and to the families, friends and loved ones who supported and encouraged you on your journey. Your hard work has paid off.