

Friends and Families, I welcome you to the California State University, Chico Commencement Ceremony for the graduating class of 2012.

I am sure the graduates would agree that without your love and support, like the kind I received from my mother and father, this would have been a far more difficult journey.

President Zingg, administration, deans, faculty and staff:

I thank you most sincerely for allowing me to offer my reflection to graduating class of 2012.

In 2011, our university revealed the ambitious Diversity Action Plan. In it, President Zingg noted:

“Diversity is not just an idea to express, but a community to form. It is at the heart of what it means to be an American Public University in the 21st Century.”

Faculty, as you go on to teach future generations of Chico State students, your role in creating this community will be pivotal. Realize that in every classroom, a student exists with the potential to teach you. Foster an environment of learning and growth, and stay open to challenging your long-held views.

For those whose success is not derived from recognition and awards but, rather, the accomplishments of your students, you have achieved the culmination of a Chico professor. For that, we are indebted to you.

To my fellow students, partners of countless late night library hours, and true idealists of this campus:

Since your first moments here, each of you challenged diversity and what it meant to be a Chico State student. The evolution of this institution is a direct response to the needs and concerns of the students. To offer a few examples of your ingenuity:

In 2009, The Associated Students Women Center underwent a transformation, becoming the all-inclusive Gender and Sexuality Equity Center. This initiative came from two students, who strived to empower their peers and challenge societal norms that oppress and marginalize.

In 2010, thousand of students, university and community members marched through Chico, creating the most notable student led University responses to California’s unrelenting cuts to higher education.

This year, I watched in amazement as students struggled to balance staggering class schedules, extracurricular involvement, and jobs. You worked and played,

debated professors over complex subject matter, and yes, even carried the infamously trendy Klean Cantine to promote sustainability.

The great Irish poet William Butler Yeats once said:
“The best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity.”

Yeats message is simple; the best of us happen to be the ones who lack the means to effectuate change, while the worst are those who possess the most motivation to achieve their goal with little concern for others. This is a chilling picture, but our generation is afforded the opportunity to redefine these roles in our society. It begins today. We no longer lack the means, because today you have received your degrees, and with it, the power and responsibility to positively impact future generations.

To the College of Communications and Education, the educators, business innovators, and professionals:
Use your knowledge and leadership to unlock the human potential and imagination of our youth and colleagues.

To the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, the linguists, scholars, and artists:
Share your contagious passion and remember to breathe new life in to the original disciplines.

To the College of Natural Sciences, the doctors, researchers, and scientists:
Remain empathetic and dedicated to serving humanity as you set out to solve the world’s most complex issues.

And now, as we venture to achieve our destinies, one thing will remain certain. We have the unprecedented opportunity to reverse the misguided efforts of our predecessors. Remember the values of Chico State --inclusiveness, dedication, and perseverance-- because today decides tomorrow.

There remains much to invent, problems to solve, and things to learn and discover. In these fleeting moments, we are handed a world with considerable challenges. Endearing graduates, we possess the imagination and potential to accept this charge. I am honored to be a 2012 graduate of California State University, Chico as we set forth to shape the reality of the future.