

2016 College of Agriculture Graduation Speech

Welcome family, friends, guests, faculty, staff, and administration. My name is Vince Pellegrini and it is an honor to serve as a speaker today. My family would say it's about time he graduates. In planning this speech, there is a lot to be said about this town, the community, and this college. On top of that - a graduation speech has to be: funny, inspirational, moving, and thought provoking. And they trusted me! Buckle up everyone!

If you have a few hours to kill and want to experience the community here, you go to a coffee shop. There is at least 5 downtown. A few weeks ago, I was at Tin Roof Café with a friend and mentor and we were talking about how the speech was going. I echoed the earlier sentiments and he said that sometimes, what sticks, isn't this jaw dropping profound thought. But, it's the simple truths we often need to hear again.

The truth I would like to share is: That it is okay to fail and be imperfect.

As graduates, we have experienced a few moments of imperfection while here.

One would think, that going to the Rec a couple times a week would put you in shape. Nope. Three flights of stairs in Plumas hall has the power to leave you winded and questioning every meal from the past week.

Or Plant Science 101 - you leave feeling like you can accomplish anything! I mean we grew what seems like 21 pounds of Bok Choy. But then, you get home, baffled. There's no way this can compliment my ever creative chicken or pasta dish. Not a real vegetable.

No matter how many note cards, study or tutoring sessions, or office hour visits, there were rare moments of confidence in Chemistry or Ochem – flash-forward to the test in Ayres 120, which was instantly filled with mutinous whispers.

And then there were moments of real imperfection and failure.

If you ask anyone in Chico what makes this place special. You would probably get a list of varying thoughts and perspectives. One thing heard time and time again though, is the people make this a place vibrant, and truthfully pretty tough to leave. And the people here allow us to be human and imperfect.

If there is a group of people who have seen us at our best and worst, it's our respective friend groups. I can't speak for each group here, but I would guess we could all say the following: Thanks loving me with my flaws, reminding me of the parts of myself that other people need, and dropping whatever it was you were doing to grab a bite at the Banshee or escape to Upper Park.

Our teachers and professors let us fail and be imperfect. You hold us to high standards. But when we failed a test, didn't get the internship we spent hours preparing for, felt lost, lacked courage or struggled with, "Is where I am supposed to be?" You pushed us forward. Thank you for not letting us settle for less than our best, and always loving us in the difficult moments.

Finally, parents. You've seen it all. We would not be the people we are without your patience, unwavering support, grace and guidance to help us navigate the grey areas of our lives. We cannot thank you enough.

We are leaving a place where we are within walking distance of our best friend and among the brightest and most dedicated staff and faculty. Saying goodbye to a place we've spent years making memories and building friendships. Where celebrating moments of success meant a quick text for a trip downtown, or during the difficult times we could easily find people who we know would sit with us amidst the questioning, but let us not be down for long.

We are each about to embark on a new journey. Many of us serving as the future of the agriculture industry and serving as a catalyst for some of the industry's most pressing problems. We've been equipped to be successful wherever we go, because we have some awesome people leading us these past years. Yet, remember, when things go different than you had planned - surround yourself with people who will love and accept you through the failure and imperfections!

Thank you!