

Jessica Candela  
Student Reflections Speaker  
Multicultural & Gender Studies and Political Science  
College of Behavioral & Social Sciences  
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Hello, and welcome! I am incredibly honored to be this year's student reflections speaker.

My name is Jess Candela, and I am graduating with double majors in Multicultural & Gender Studies and Political Science from the College of Behavioral & Social Sciences.

Like others here today, my journey in college has been an adventure.

One of my adventures was studying abroad. I spent a wonderful summer in Torino, Italy, learning the Italian language and culture.

Another adventure was spending an amazing semester in Washington, D.C. I interned for a California Congressperson, and experienced the fast-paced political climate of Capitol Hill.

No matter where I travel or find fulfilling experiences, I return to Chico, my always-welcoming home. A community like no other, Chico is friendly to newcomers and oldtimers alike.

There are some events that perfectly illustrate the Chico Experience. These may include: nervously attending summer orientation, jumping into One Mile in Bidwell Park for the very first time, enjoying local food at Thursday Night Market, or finishing one's final undergraduate course. The Chico Experience is truly unique.

I would like to take a moment to appreciate how beautifully diverse our campus is. Chico State is a Hispanic-serving institution, with 30% of students identifying as Chicano, Hispanic, or Latino.

Our students encompass a variety of ages, genders, nationalities, political ideologies, races, religions, sexualities, and socioeconomic levels. Our differences, as well as our commonalities, should absolutely be celebrated.

Having diverse classmates allows us to hear varying perspectives, glimpse into lives that may be different from our own, and seek deeper understandings.

Diversity makes us stronger as we form tighter bonds, and more encompassing worldviews.

Our global community requires diverse, strong leaders to build relationships, develop communities, and negotiate compromises.

Graduates from the Colleges of Behavioral & Social Sciences and Humanities & Fine Arts are prepared to be leaders through art, education, politics, and research.

The skills that we've learned during our time at Chico State -- in classes, clubs, internships, jobs, and sports -- have prepared us for leadership. We are ready and willing to create positive change in our communities.

To all the family, friends, loved ones, mentors, and professors who are here today: we truly couldn't have done it without you.

Congratulations to Chico State's 2017 graduates! Enjoy the celebrations today, and get to work tomorrow. Thank you.