

**Elizabeth Konecny**

**May 20th Reflection Speech**

**College of Arts and Humanities and College of Business**

Good morning. Thank you friends, family, faculty and staff for joining us in our celebration today. Please join me in congratulating the graduating class of 2018. Congratulations to the students from the College of Humanities and Fine Arts and congratulations to the students from the College of Business.

My name is Elizabeth Konecny, and my last name means a lot to me, as I'm sure your names and heritage mean a lot to you. In Slavic, Konecny means ultimate or final: the last person in a village, the final child born into a family, a name for someone who brings something to a conclusion. At this moment, with all of you, we are concluding the chapter of our undergrad experience.

Like many students here, I am proud to be the first person in my immediate family to be graduating from a 4-year university. I am a Business Information Systems major, within the College of Business where I have had the opportunity to make personal connections with my instructors and I get to see the same group of people, everyday, in every class. We are a family, we laugh together and support each other, and I'm going to miss every one of their smart-alec remarks. I have had the amazing opportunity to work with some of the best individuals I know as the President of SAP Club and as a writing tutor on campus. And I get to stand up here and celebrate with you the completion of our undergraduate education.

I have made some great memories here at Chico State, but my journey wasn't easy. I have struggled with Depression my entire life. Depression is not something you work through, it is something you work with. There are good days and there are bad days, or in my case there are bad months. When I transferred to Chico State, I learned my father had stage four cancer, but he was fighting it and everything seemed to be going well. At the end of last semester my father's health started to go down hill, and on March 25, 2018, my father lost his battle.

I thrive on control. I need to schedule getting up in the morning and I need to schedule what I'm going to do throughout the day to be productive. But when someone who you love leaves this life, that schedule is thrown out the window. There is no point even trying to write it. I had zero control, I couldn't even remember what day it was. But through all of this I learned one of the most valuable lessons of my life so far: you can trust other people, you can lean on someone's shoulders, and you can cry. You are not alone.

I didn't realize how much support I had here at Chico State until I hit rock bottom. From the Dean's Office, to my instructors, to my classmates and colleagues emailing, calling and texting me on a daily basis, I felt a lot of the weight on my shoulders being lifted and dispersed amongst everyone around me, near and far.

Nobody can succeed alone. Be it solving a complex math problem or being on a team for work, to needing someone (or in my case, my cat, Sable) there to help you wake up in the morning and get through the day. We all need someone. I tried to carry all of my burdens, my friend's burdens, my family's, even stranger's burdens on my shoulders and I broke.

But the relationships you forge will create a net that will hold you above the water when you fall. Because it's not a matter of if you fall, but a matter of when you fall. If I learned one thing from being here at Chico State, it's that we are stronger as a whole than as individuals. So look to your left and to your right, those people are a part of your net now, forever. Go out and make a new connection with every person you cross paths with and seek out new relationships. Networks are not just for finding a job, but for getting through difficult times.

I want to take this moment to thank all of my friends, my family, my instructors and my fellow students for catching me when I fell and holding me up through all of the turmoil. My aunt Doneen for being a phone call away. My instructors for providing me a safe place to cry during the day in their offices. My classmates always finding a way to make me smile, even if it was just acting like complete clowns. Thank you, I couldn't have made it here without you. And for everyone here, I hope you all the best and that you find the support you need to succeed in everything that you try. To build your network and find not only your own support but be the person to support someone else.

Thank you so much for your time. I appreciate the honor of being in front of you all today. Congratulations again to the graduating class of 2018, and enjoy your last (or almost last) day as an undergrad at Chico State.