

Hello all, and welcome to the Volgenau School of Engineering Degree Celebration.

It is such a pleasure to stand before all of you today, to commemorate our hard work and achievements. I never imagined this day would come so quickly. Fue hace solo 12 años que llegue a este pais, sin saber el idioma pero con los tipos de sueños que solo se sueñan aquí: el sueño Americano. It was only 12 years ago that I came to this country, not knowing the language but with the type of dreams that are only dreamt here: the American Dream.

Time sure flies, I'm **convinced** we are in time-warp. Time seems distorted, like it's all moving too fast... I can't be the only one who thinks that! Right?! Yet, here we are, getting ready to enter the world as "real" adults.

Thanks to the education we received from the Volgenau School of Engineering, today, we will be stepping out into the world with an arsenal of skills. The Volgenau School of Engineering has provided us with so many priceless things: an education, friendships, and life lessons. So, I want to urge all of you to make an effort to stay connected to the school in any way that you can.

It's important to recognize that we did not achieve all this greatness alone. So, let's take a moment to recognize those helped us along the way. Let's thank our families for the unconditional support. Let's thank our professors for pushing us beyond our limits. And let's thank our friends for holding us up when our burdens felt too heavy.

During our time at Mason, we have laughed, and cried, and laughed so hard we cried. We have grown and blossomed. We have climbed mountains. And, we have failed. We may have felt defeated. We have been knocked down and out, have **bled**, and have tasted the bitterness of feeling like we are not good enough. But, we have fought back, picked ourselves up, yelled out "I MATTER." We have continued pushing to get us to where we are today. Today, we are so much more than what our freshman selves could've *ever* dreamed of. **Today, we are college graduates!**

As Volgenau School of Engineering students, we are graduating with a degree from a top institution, in a time with infinite knowledge at our fingertips and glass ceilings waiting to be shattered. An era when our country and our planet face enormous challenges; challenges that I hope many of you will conquer.

All of us, graduating students from the Volgenau School of Engineering, are most likely the critical thinkers. We are the logicals,

the play-it-safe-ers, the pros and cons list-makers. We have been taught to solve problems with high precision, high accuracy and with no room for uncertainty.

Sometimes our career choice leaves little room for risks. If you are building a bridge, designing a defense system, or working in a healthcare setting, you need accuracy and precision.

Risky choices are risky **because** of the uncertainty of failure, but us engineers, we don't like uncertainty.

Uncertainty is scary, at any point in our lives. None of us want to feel we have failed, but risks make for adventures, and that is what makes life exciting. Safe harbors don't make good sailors. As the famous explorer of the 16th century, Sir Francis Drake said, "It is in losing sight of land that we find the stars."

Let's rejoice in the unexpected twists that often knock the wind out of us, but can also leave us breathless.

The risky choices we make will be the ones that shape us, and whether we succeed or fail, we will find and create ourselves. And when we fail, we will not be left emptyhanded: we'll have gained wisdom.

When was the last time **you** jumped into the unknown with nothing but a heart full of hope?

You have the skills, you have the knowledge, you have the power, and you have the heart. When you step out of this room and into the real world remember “the only walls that exist are those you have placed in your mind. And whatever obstacles you conceive, exist only because you have forgotten what you have already achieved.”

Thank you, and congratulations to the class of 2017!