

## **CLASS OF 2017 FAREWELL**

**Joseph Rhee, Student Body President**

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen.

Before we close this commencement, I would like to say a few words.

First, to the families, friends, and guests. Thank you. Thank you for the continual love that you have poured out to us over the past four years. Thank you for supporting us in all the activities we wanted to do whether it was on the field, the classroom, the theater, or the many more places this class has made its mark on. And finally, thank you for believing in us. You taught us that whether we win or lose in life, we should never set our standard lower than what we're capable of. You made us believe when we doubted in ourselves, and so I cannot thank all the families and friends enough.

Congratulations Class of 2017. Although we may have struggled a little during this last semester, we finished and you all deserve to be on that stage.

I thought about what I wanted to say to you guys. Maybe things like: live your life with no regrets, be happy, believe in yourself, the ending of one chapter and the start of another. But instead I want to focus on what's going to happen in the future.

The shift from high school to college will be a major change involving new schedules, friends, and responsibilities. For most of us, life after high school is the first time we are independent from our parents or guardians, so moving into the next phase of life can be an intimidating change. For some of us, moving on from a community of friends, teachers, and mentors created over our high school years can lead to a feeling of emptiness.

And so we're going to have low points in our lives. And it's how we handle these situations that's going to determine whether or not we're going to allow obstacles to affect who you will become. In the movie X-Men, Days of Future Past, there is a scene where a younger, pessimistic Charles Xavier communicates with an older, wiser, optimistic Charles Xavier from the future. I found it to be a powerful scene to share with you all because it showed the younger Charles Xavier as someone who was afraid of bearing the responsibilities and pain of all the mutants in the world. For him, it was easier to avoid that burden. But, in life, there needs to be a courage to choose the harder right than the easier wrong, to live above the common level of life, to confront pain. This message is clearly conveyed when the older Professor Xavier responds with, and I quote: "And as frightening as it may be, that pain will make you stronger, when you allow yourself to feel it, and embrace it...it is the greatest gift that we have, to bear that pain without breaking." And he ends by saying, "We need you to hope again."

My message to you guys is that you hope during those times of difficulties, that situations will change for the better, you yourself will grow stronger, and that the people that surround you would be positively impacted by your change.

I wish you guys well, that you will have fun in whatever you do, that you enjoy the next years of your lives, and that we will meet again in the future.