

Class of 2023 Graduation Speech
Mario Perez

Good evening, friends, family, faculty, staff, and, most importantly, the class of 2023. I want to thank everyone who is here and thank God for putting me in this position to speak to you all.

To my fellow graduates,
We Made it.

The all-nighters, the long essays, the group projects. It has all paid off. We came to this institution in search of an education, yet as we depart its hallowed halls, we realize that our experience here has yielded far more than academic knowledge.

I remember walking into my first college class unsure if I belonged. I sat there in Mrs. Singleton's class playing images in my head of how my college experience would unfold. Stressing myself so early on if I was apt to be in high standards. To say the least, I was scared. As my journey progressed, I gradually came to embrace my individuality, buoyed by the affirmations of my educators. My path was not easy. It was filled with trials and tribulations but through this, there were 3 pieces of advice I received that served as a lighthouse. I want to share them with you as you embark on your new journeys.

Number one. Don't be afraid to fail.

Many successful people have faced failures along the way, but they persevered and learned from their mistakes. Failure is a valuable opportunity for growth and learning, and it is often a necessary step on the path to success. So don't be afraid to take risks. Pick up a new hobby, start a business, ask that person out. Try new things and make those mistakes. Embrace failure as a teacher and use it as motivation to push yourself even further. Remember, the only true failure is giving up on your dreams.

Number two. Value your relationships

I urge you to remember the importance of valuing relationships and not letting school define you. While academic achievements are undoubtedly important, they are not the only measure of success. It is equally important to cultivate meaningful relationships with the people in your life. These can provide you with the support, love, and guidance you need to succeed in all areas of your life. So, don't forget to take the time to nurture your connections, whether it's with your family, friends, or significant other. This graduation is just the beginning of your journey, so don't let school overshadow the people that will sustain you throughout your life.

Number 3. Be Yourself

College is a time of tremendous growth and self-discovery, and it's natural to feel pressure to conform to the expectations of others. However, I challenge you to resist that pressure and to embrace your true self. When you embrace who you truly are, you open yourself up to new experiences, new perspectives, and new relationships that will enrich your life in ways you never thought possible. Do not be afraid to express your unique talents, interests, and passions, even if they don't fit neatly into society's expectations. Remember that the world needs your

unique gifts and that by being true to yourself, you inspire others to do the same. So, I implore you to embrace your individuality and to be confident in your own skin.

Now as we depart from this graduation into another chapter of our life. I urge you to take what you have learned here and use it as a springboard to soar to new heights. This moment marks the culmination of years of hard work, dedication, and sacrifice, and it is a testament to your perseverance and tenacity. As you step out into the world, remember that the journey does not end here. Instead, it is merely the beginning of a new chapter in your lives, one that is filled with endless possibilities and opportunities. Stay hungry, stay curious, and never lose sight of your dreams. Let the fire within you burn brightly and never allow the setbacks and challenges of life to extinguish it. Remember that every great achievement begins with a dream, and it is only through perseverance, hard work, and dedication that we can bring those goals to fruition. So, hold fast to your aspirations, remain focused on your goals, and let your passion drive you forward. And when you do finally achieve everything, you've ever wanted, do not forget the hard work and dedication it took to get there and use your success to inspire others to pursue their own dreams. Congratulations, class of 2023, go out there and create a better tomorrow for all.

Mario Perez
Associate in Science – Exercise Science
Class of 2023