

Suffolk University Sawyer Business School Commencement
Sunday, May 20, 2018
Blue Hills Bank Pavilion, Boston
Undergraduate Commencement Speaker
Redona Marku

Good morning Chairman Lamb, President Kelly, Dean O'Neil, distinguished guests, faculty, and graduating Class of 2018. My name is Redona Marku, and today I'm receiving a dual degree in finance and information systems, with a concentration in big data and analytics. Starting this July, I plan to continue pursuing my interest in these disciplines at JP Morgan Chase, an internship that led to a full-time position.

I am honored with the privilege of representing my class during today's commencement. As I reminisced on my last four years at Suffolk University in preparation for this moment, I couldn't help but recall sitting in Kim Larkin's office during the first week of school. Many of you may know her as the incredibly intelligent and wonderfully sassy director of the business school Honors Program. She said to me, every year I welcome a group of scared freshmen into this University, and in the blink of an eye, they transform into confident seniors ready to take on the world. I vividly remember that moment, and wondering if I, too, had it in me to become that poised student she spoke of. And if the so-called transformation could hurry it up a little.

As I stand before you today, I realize just how much this institution has truly shaped the people we've become. For starters, four years ago, I never would have dreamed that I could build the confidence to give a speech like this one before thousands of people. My professors and peers have encouraged me every single day to have faith in my intelligence, to apply for things I may not feel qualified for, and to give them my all. The results have been incredible.

The late Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, I cannot remember the books I've read any more than the meals I've eaten. Even so, they have made me. I am certain each of you would agree with me when I say, I can't remember every faculty member I've come across, every group project I've participated in, every classmate I've befriended, or each assignment I've stayed up half the night completing. But even so, they have made me.

Those devoted professors who pushed us past our limits, taught us the true satisfaction that comes with pouring your heart into a piece of work, and in turn creating something that makes you proud. I could list countless examples of these instances at Suffolk, such as when I took the ISOM capstone course with Professor Dominic Thomas. And every time I thought I was done with my final project, he could come up with a million ways to improve my work, pushing me to submit the best version possible.

The group projects that always just so happened to have at least one free rider taught us the significance of being a good leader, or even more importantly, how impactful it can be to put your ego aside and let someone more qualified lead the way. I learned how crucial this skill was in my capital budgeting finance course, where I realized that no matter how hard I worked, there would still be times when my team members had a much better understanding of the assignments than I did. So I had to learn to let go and follow their lead.

Those strangers in our classes that we now consider our closest friends. They taught us that a few words of encouragement from a peer could mean the difference between an insecure student afraid to speak up and an assured one willing to express their opinion, no matter how unpopular it may be. They showed us that we must stick together, because helping your neighbor will not take your beloved “A” away from you. And that we must support one another so that we can all grow as one.

Lastly, the countless assignments that we stayed up all night trying to make sense of, well, they taught us that sleep really is for the weak. We don’t get to choose how an environment shapes us, but we do get to choose our environment.

I am extremely happy I chose Suffolk, and am grateful for the person it has helped me become. I hope that whatever environment or path each of you may choose to follow after this point helps you become the best possible version of yourself. I would like to thank, sidomos familjen time – ju dua me gjith shipirt (especially my family – I love you with all shipirt), all of our friends and families for supporting us, Suffolk faculty for motivating us, and our fellow classmates for inspiring us. Thank you.