

**Suffolk University College of Arts & Sciences Commencement
Sunday, May 19, 2019
Rockland Trust Bank Pavilion, Boston
Student Commencement Speaker
Margaret Randall**

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you to the parents, family, and friends who are here today and have supported us along the way. Thank you to our professors, advisers, deans and faculty. And hello, Class of 2019. [APPLAUSE]

Suffolk has a funny way of making us grow up without us even realizing it.

Four years ago, when I toured Suffolk as a senior in high school, I instantly felt at home. I also couldn't help but notice the building next door with the golden dome. You know the one I'm talking about. A monstrous capitol buzzing with public servants. I knew I wanted to work there one day, but the goal seemed too lofty and the ambitions too high for what I could achieve.

Two years ago, I couldn't have pictured myself here today. One afternoon in the summer of 2017 I sat crying in my academic adviser's office. A situation that may as well be a degree requirement for prospective graduates.

Two years ago I was scared. I would be finishing my undergraduate studies a year early and it terrified me. I had taken the right courses, passed the necessary exams, but I still felt like I wasn't ready to join the real world or ready to be a real adult. I couldn't leave Suffolk just yet. So, at my adviser's suggestion, I enrolled in the accelerated master's and was able to stay at Suffolk for one more year.

When I started at Suffolk, I had no idea that I would earn two degrees in four years, and I didn't know that, before graduation, I would be working at the State House for the senate president of Massachusetts. [APPLAUSE]

Suffolk had taught me how to be a real adult, and I didn't even notice it.

There was so much I couldn't have possibly known during my first visit to campus. I didn't know what my future had in store, but I knew that Suffolk was my home.

I look back on my Suffolk journey and I feel really lucky, but I know it's not luck alone that got us all here today.

It's the support from our professors in academic departments who respond to our questions—and sometimes tears—with plans of action. It's the encouragement from those who hired us for our first jobs and internships. It's our families with their love and support. And it's my parents who instilled in my three siblings and me, oh, gosh, a lesson passed through generations. You are as strong as you want yourself to be. [APPLAUSE]

But most importantly, it's our classmates. That's you, guys. Around us are those whose Suffolk journeys and individual paths have intertwined and led us all here today. They're the friends made in study groups, in late-night common room hangouts. They're tour guides, they're RAs, and they're lab partners. They're teammates. Go, Rams. And they're the random roommate selections who have become lifelong friends.

College, from undergraduate to graduate school, can feel like a continuum between doubt and confidence. And those who always encourage me to be my most confident self are graduating today.

One of my role models, Shirley Chisholm, who in 1968 became the first black woman elected to Congress, said: If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair. [APPLAUSE]

Class of 2019, we did it together. We are made stronger through our diversity in experience, and our education is grounded in what we have learned from one another. And when self-doubt crept in, we championed one another. We found another seat and made room at the table.

We have been active and vocal. We have run for office, voted, and marched with signs. We have stood together raising our voices and comforted one another in silence.

But what makes Suffolk students so unique is that we don't just let change happen to us. We make change happen. Whether it be at our school, in the city of Boston, or in the world around us.

And I wasn't selected to speak today because I have some sage departing wisdom. No. Not at all. In fact, if there's one thing that hasn't changed over the past four years, it's the many questions I have. Like is there a way to get to campus while avoiding the wind tunnels? Where can we find a better view for a championship parade?

Will this venue be renamed after graduation to the Samia Pavilion, or the Smith Pavilion? When is the next time Maria will greet us at Café 73 with hey, baby cat? [APPLAUSE]

Will we forget the way the light falls on Tremont Street when the sun sets behind the Boston Common? When is the next time our paths will cross? What next?

Class of 2019, I do not have all the answers. And if there's anything I've learned about being a real adult, it's that no one has all the answers. But I know that we are ready. We will always have a home at Suffolk, and the world needs graduates like us. Congratulations, class of 2019. We did it. [APPLAUSE]