

**Suffolk University Sawyer Business School
Class of 2020 Commencement
Sunday, May 19, 2019
Fenway Park
Commencement Student Speaker
Sophia Romeo, BSBA '20**

Good afternoon, everyone. Faculty, staff, my family, friends, the Sox, if you're out there in the crowd listening, but most importantly, the Class of 2020. [APPLAUSE]

I can't believe I get to stand up here, in 2021, no less, and address this historic class. Even my dad, who's a Yankees fan, thinks this is pretty cool.

As I stand here in the middle of this iconic Boston ballpark, it makes me think of the first time I swung a baseball bat. I played T-ball for a season in elementary school. My dad was the coach. When he asked me what my favorite position was, I told him catcher. I loved an outfit change in between innings. Or dugout, because I loved to sing the cheers.

Looking back on my very brief stint as a ballplayer, I realize there are a lot of lessons you can learn from the sport of baseball.

Lesson one: You're always going to be a rookie at some point. This year is going to be a year of firsts. The first time you hug your grandparents in a year. The first time you meet your co-workers in person instead of on Zoom. And the first time you're going to feel like a real college graduate.

Just remember, you've made it through firsts before. You had your first day at Suffolk. You failed your first midterm, and you got your first A. And look at where you are now.

Lesson two: You can't steal second with your foot on first. In order to achieve something great, you need to leave your comfort zone. During my junior year at Suffolk, I decided I was going to try out for every performing arts club. I tried out for the hip hop team, salsa club, and even auditioned to be the lead singer of a band.

To say these auditions were unsuccessful would be an understatement. While I didn't make it to second base, my foot left first. Suffolk has given us all countless opportunities to take a lot of different first steps. And while some of them don't go anywhere, like my hip hop career, some of them took me down the right path, the path that has led me to where I am today, standing in front of you at the most iconic ballpark in Boston. Keep fouling them off and wait for your pitch.

Lesson three: Hustle until the last out. Even if you're down three games to none in a best of seven series, even if you're down a run in the ninth inning of Game Four, and even if you're fighting the dreaded Curse of the Bambino, never give up. You still have more hustle to give.

Lesson four: Be ready for the curve ball. If we've learned anything from this past year, it's that life comes at you with the unexpected. Industries have had to pivot, businesses have closed their doors, and we've had to transition to an online world.

What at first looked like setbacks were really opportunities for growth. We learned a new skill, spent extra time with our loved ones, and got really, really good at using Zoom. Take that new skill you learned and turn it into a business. Take the empathy you've grown and put it back into the world. And use your new skills on Zoom to crush your next interview. No one would have thought a pandemic was coming a year ago. And no one would have thought that Tom Brady would win a Super Bowl ... *for Tampa?!*

Lesson five: While you may be batting alone, you always have a team supporting you. We will all go on to apply for jobs, start businesses, or go for that promotion. It can sometimes feel like you're going through these big moments alone. Lean on each other. Stay connected with your classmates and reach out to Suffolk. Never forget the people that got you here, and never forget the community at Suffolk who will always be cheering you on.

Lesson six: There's nothing wrong with a little seventh-inning stretch. Slow down. Take a moment. Enjoy life. This year has shown us we can't take anything for granted. Balance is important. Work hard, but sing "Sweet Caroline" along the way.

And finally, lesson seven: Yesterday's home runs don't win today's games. It's time to look forward. It's been a difficult year, or at the very least an unusual year. We graduated with no graduation, and we went on to jobs with no offices.

We are ready. As Baseball Hall of Famer Earl Weaver said, the key to winning baseball games is fundamentals and three-run homers. Suffolk has given us the fundamentals. Now it's time to hit those home runs. The whole world is entering a new chapter together. Let's make a positive impact on it.

So, Class of 2020, let's play ball. [APPLAUSE]