

Suffolk University College of Arts & Sciences Commencement
Saturday, May 22, 2021
Fenway Park
Student Commencement Speaker
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To the Professors, Administrators, family members, friends and of course my fellow classmates who are able to be here today, and to everyone watching at home, thank you and hello. I'm so honored to represent the Class of 2021 as we gather here with excitement for the future. As I have your attention for the next few minutes, I'd like you to reflect on a seemingly simple question: "Where do you belong?"

I'm sure we all remember committing to Suffolk. I had a smile pinned to my face for the next three days. You see, my mind was set from the moment I stepped foot on the Freedom Trail. Because it wasn't just about my education, it was about the experience as a whole. I felt as though there was a new me just waiting to be found, waiting to truly belong. I saw myself rushing to class alongside jagged streets and jaywalkers. I saw myself here as a Bostonian at Suffolk.

As incoming students, we all set out to redefine ourselves. I remember signing up for just about every club and event I could. I made a place in many different ways, but where did I really belong? And though that question may mean something different to everyone, Suffolk lets you know that it's *supposed* to mean something different to everyone.

In the next two years, I found my place to belong, as time was split with the navigation and trials of hard course work and learning moments. But sophomore and junior year were also times of incredible friendship, academic conferences, job opportunities and all the moments I hoped for in my college experience.

What I was unable to see when I began was how much of these years would be made up of the in between moments of my education. The endless hours of studio time with peers that turned into my best friends, the late night walks to Bova's, the smiles at the T stop when you recognized someone you know, and how Suffolk staff can make you feel so at home by just remembering your name. Being a Suffolk student extends farther than the classroom in ways I could have never predicted. It doesn't mean you belong to just a school. It means you belong to a place, to a community.

And when COVID-19 forced life as we knew it to take a pause, we as students kept going. For some it meant unlearning everything that was familiar. Anxieties arose and the pounding question returned to an entire nation of college students: “Where do you belong?”

We have transformed our learning styles and redefined what it means to belong as a college student in 2021. Through the struggles, we formed a new kind of community that only hardship can bring. We as students began to see the power that the college experience holds in our lives. For me, that experience was my tie to this city and my jobs as an RA, a tutor and an MFA employee. Suffolk again began to show how deeply rooted it is in my life and where I really belong. Whether you started your college experience at Suffolk or not, I’m so glad you ended up here. Here with peers that care and professors that look deeper than just my course work to help me succeed. Here where I feel seen and heard by my University. Simply put, here, smiling with you all today.

I’ve heard so many professors and professionals state how we deserve a gold medal for our dedication to learning. Well, here we are. This is our gold medal. We are living through history and we are the history. Our journey has made this day mean so much more. Be comforted by the fact that we are figuring this out together and together, though our success and our struggles are never the same, we grow strong and we form a new kind of belonging.

But for now, my fellow graduates, take this day moment by moment. We all have our own story of belonging at Suffolk. Take a sigh of relief in knowing that you are here, you made it, and that is enough. It is an honor to stand in front of you and a privilege to walk beside you. Congratulations to the Class of 2021. And just in case no one told you yet, you belong here. Thank you.