

**Suffolk University College of Arts & Sciences**  
**Class of 2023 Commencement**  
**Sunday, May 21, 2023**  
**Leader Bank Pavilion**  
**Undergraduate Student Speaker**  
**Lindsay Dieudonne, BA '23**

Who would have thought we would have been graduating with the Marty Walsh? [LAUGHTER] Missed a few discussion posts, but that's OK, we'll talk later. [LAUGHTER] Good afternoon, and thank you to President Kelly, the board of trustees, Dean Sparks, and all of the faculty, staff, friends, and families who have made this day possible. And a special welcome to the soon-to-be-graduates of the Class of 2023. [APPLAUSE] My name is Lindsay Dieudonne.

**[00:30]** And I have the honor of being your commencement speaker this afternoon. [APPLAUSE] But before I begin, I have to acknowledge my mom, brothers, sister, godmother, and family for being my rock through these four years—otherwise it will be a long ride home. [LAUGHTER] So thank you. Let's take it back to senior year of high school. Every single one of you seated before me have

**[01:00]** experienced similar journeys. The application process, the rejections, acceptances, the financial aid packages that looked nothing like what you needed, or those that made you think more money, less problems. Think about how nervous or excited you were, how you were unsure of how you would be making your way throughout these next few years, with or without the gaze of your parent or guardian, how you imagined the college life would be. But little did you know,

**[01:30]** Suffolk University is a dry campus. [LAUGHTER] Now think about today, how far you've come since those days, how many adversities and challenges you've overcome. The people along the way that have motivated and supported you, or the self-motivation and determination you had to create for yourselves to forge your own path and make your own way. That same high school senior is sitting here with gained real-life experiences

**[02:00]** and so much more wisdom. And so the graduate students here today who have juggled personal life, work, and now another degree under your belt, you might have not felt like you were doing it all. But trust me, you have done more than you know. Completing your degree here at Suffolk isn't something to be taken lightly. You've learned how to advocate for yourself. You've learned that if you ask, you will receive. And you've learned that there is no door that has been opened for you that any person can shut.

**[02:30]** And for many of us, we have learned even more about our identities. You've changed, but you've grown immensely. When I first started at Suffolk, I was so ready to leave behind high school and start afresh. I was ready for new people, new experiences, new scenery, and all of that came true, except now I'm graduating in the same place I graduated high school four years ago.

[LAUGHTER] Isn't like something? We all experienced the bustling and lively community of students and activities

**[03:00]** here at Suffolk through involvement fairs, scavenger hunts and free merch and food every minute of every day. That freshman 15 was heavily sponsored by Sodexo. [LAUGHTER] But what I experienced that will never leave me is the plethora of smiles and warm greetings from kitchen staff, security guards, and especially from the Division of Student Affairs. I would also be remiss if I didn't mention the impact that my McNair and Black Student Union family

**[03:30]** as well as my professors have had on my experience. [APPLAUSE] It is my personal belief that without God and without the loving support of my family and friends, many of whom I made here at Suffolk, I would not be where I am today. And let's be real. As has been mentioned before, COVID did a number on us. We attended more Zoom classes than in person classes. Some wore masks and smizing than cheerful grins.

**[04:00]** And yet every step of the way, there was someone there to comfort us through that time, whether it be friends or faculty or staff member. That is the beauty of Suffolk. No matter how many struggles we may face, interpersonal or institutional, reaching out to the right person will alleviate the situation. I may not have substantial advice for anyone moving forward from Suffolk today, but I do have this to say. Remember your story and be yourself loudly.

**[04:30]** You have the power to change institutions, redirect history, and call down principalities through the voice you were given alone. No one here is leaving Suffolk the way they came in. And I think that's what it means to make your way. Make your way to finding your voice. Make your way to finding your identity. And eventually make your way into the world with everything you've learned and all the wisdom you've gained, entering every single place a little brighter and leaving it

**[05:00]** a little better. Class of 2023, I don't know about you all, but I'm ready to close this chapter and say, "Mama, we made it." Congratulations. I love you all. [APPLAUSE]