

Suffolk University Law School
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Student Speaker
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A few years ago, we walked through the doors of Suffolk University Law School into orientation and spent the day getting a preview of what the next three to four years of our lives would look like. We sat in classrooms, introduced to our sections, introduced to the famous IRAC, and then were presented with our first real legal question. *What is a dwelling?* Well, now after everything law school has taught us, I think we know the answer to that, because it's what we heard our professors say over and over again, "It depends."

From that first day we began more than just an academic journey. We began a personal one, a journey into a new phase of our lives, to uncover what drives us, to decide what kinds of lawyers we want to be.

And we did not do this alone.

It was through this community here at Suffolk that we found our footing. Late nights studying with friends, sharing outlines, laughing over ridiculous acronyms we'd come up with just to remember a rule or case law. Deans and advisors who were there to support us, especially when it came time to panic over OM 1. Library and tech staff who were there whenever a certain testing platform ran into issues. A cafeteria team that kept us fed all those times we had to spend the whole day at school working on an assignment, that maybe we shouldn't have started the week it was due. Maintenance, security, and cleaning staff, who provided safe and accessible spaces for us to build these memories. Journals, clubs, clinics that helped us discover what we care about. And professors who did more than just teach us the law. They reminded us to stay grounded in our humanity.

Now, in my classes and in clinic, we often talked about the power that is found in storytelling. Each of us carries a story that brought us here.

And so today, we sit among hundreds of stories. Stories of students who packed up their lives and came to a new city, not knowing exactly what they would find, but willing to find out. Stories of those who tried other paths first and returned to school because their pursuit of knowledge was not over yet. Students who are also parents, moving between classrooms and kitchens, casebooks and bedtime routines. Part-time students carrying full-time responsibilities who still found a way to pursue their dreams. Stories of students who are immigrants or the children of immigrants, who carry with them not only their own ambitions, but the sacrifices, hopes, and courage of those who came before them. And the stories of the families in this room today, who stood behind us, lifted us up, and made it possible for us to be here. So welcome, everybody. Welcome to a testament of what strength, diversity, and hope does accomplish.

Our journeys and shared experiences at Suffolk taught us perseverance, persistence, and purpose.

There were moments where the schoolwork may have felt overwhelming. And yet we still showed up, and we pushed through. Now you can hear it in the way that we sit together, talking with excitement about the cases we're working on, the assignments we're thrilled about, the moments where we finally feel like we belong in this work. That is perseverance.

Cold calls once filled the room with silence and hesitation. But over time, they taught us something more. How to keep speaking, even when we are unsure, even when our voices shook. And now many of us have stood in courtrooms, argued before judges, and stepped into spaces we had only once imagined. That is persistence.

From different backgrounds, cultures, and walks of lives, our stories began in different places, shaped by our personal, unique experiences. Those stories now meet in this moment, as we earn our juris doctorate degrees together, ready to take what we have learned and carry it into something beyond ourselves. That is shared purpose.

As we move forward, I'd like to leave you with this. When you are confronted with something that does not sit right with you, something that is not in alignment with the values that you have built here, remember this. You always have a choice. You can dissent.

Change does not only happen in courtrooms, because it starts much smaller than that. It starts in how we treat people and how we listen, and how we show up for our communities, our clients, and for each other. It starts with basic kindness.

Because the same people who will stand in court advocating for justice are the same people who can make someone feel seen, heard, and valued in everyday moments. And that, that is where the real change begins.

The impact we will have will not only be measured by cases won or deals we make, but by how we leave the world a better place than we found it. And we will.

What a privilege it is to carry that forward in the work ahead.

Congratulations to all of us, and to the stories that do not end here, but are just getting started.

Thank you. [APPLAUSE]