

Suffolk University
Sawyer Business School
Commencement 2026

Graduate Speaker
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Good morning.

I would like to begin by dedicating this speech to my family group-chat back home. For two years, they have responded to every single milestone of this journey with the same three questions. *Are you eating?* [LAUGHTER] *Are you sleeping?* [LAUGHTER] *Have you found a job yet?* [LAUGHTER]

The answers, for the record, are sometimes, rarely, and as of today, working on it.
[LAUGHTER]

But underneath all those questions, there was something much deeper. I think they meant to ask, *are you OK? Are you finding your place? Are you becoming who you hoped to be?*

Standing here today, I think I finally have an answer.

Distinguished faculty and respected staff, proud families and friends who have traveled across cities, countries, and continents, and my fellow graduates, the Class of 2026, today is not merely a celebration of achievement. It is recognition of endurance, of transformation, and of the quiet, stubborn strength it took to keep going, especially on the days no one else saw us.

As an international student, I arrived in the United States alone, uncertainty in my mind, responsibility on my shoulders, and hope in my heart. From my very first day on campus,

something shifted. I felt seen. I felt supported. And most importantly, I felt that I belonged here. Sawyer Business School didn't just educate us. It held space for us to grow.

Early in my time here, I had the chance to compete in the 'Pitch Yourself' competition, where I was selected among the top four students. Standing on the stage today feels like a full circle moment—a reminder of how much can grow from a single opportunity, and how profoundly it matters when someone believes in you, even before you completely believe in yourself.

Each of us arrived here with a different story. Some had family close by. Some learned to live far from them. And some of us crossed oceans, time zones, and entire worlds to be here. But we were united by this Suffolk and the Sawyer Business School that made us feel like we were exactly where we were meant to be.

The trustees, the dean, and every person who dedicated themselves to this institution—I had a chance to meet them and see how beautifully they represent the very truest sense of what Suffolk is. Thank you so much. [APPLAUSE] Our professors, they did more than just teach. They challenged us to think critically, to question assumptions, and to step into our potential with confidence. They didn't just prepare us for careers. They prepared us to contribute meaningfully to the world, and they consistently reminded us, we're not here to fit in, but we're here to stand out.

Beyond the classroom, this institution gave us real-world perspective through fellowships, mentorship programs, job shadowing, and SBS Edge enhancements. We learned to translate knowledge into action. Programs like Allyship at Work showed us that true leadership isn't just about personal success. It's about inclusion, responsibility, and the courage to advocate for others. Through service days and community engagement, we came to understand that our impact is not just measured by what we accumulate, but by what we give back.

Growth, we learned, does not happen in isolation. It happens in community.

I also want to pause and thank the people who work behind the scenes, the International Student Services Office, the Graduate Student Association, Student Employment, Student Account Services teams, who guided us through systems many of us were navigating for the first time in my life. To advisors, thank you so much for your patience and your belief in us, especially on the days we needed it the most. And to the security teams, housekeeping staff, and cafeteria workers, thank you. You made this campus feel safe, welcoming, and like home, even when home was thousands of miles away. [APPLAUSE]

My parents weren't able to make it today, but Ma, Pa, I hope you're watching me, and I know you're proud of me. Thank you so much for everything. [APPLAUSE] But some of you made sure I survived anyway, and honestly, that might be the more impressive feat. The late-night burritos, the spontaneous living room dance parties that somehow fixed everything, the impromptu movie nights that lasted until 3 a.m., the meals you cooked for me, and perhaps more heroically, surviving the meals that I cooked for you. You turned a city that I didn't know into a place I'll never forget. Thank you for becoming my family before I even realized I was looking for one. I know you guys are there somewhere. Love you. Thank you so much. [APPLAUSE]

And now, to my fellow graduates. This degree represents more than just knowledge. It represents sacrifice. It represents the ability to keep moving forward when the path ahead was uncertain. As graduate students, many of us were juggling financial issues, academics, career anxieties, and for some of us, the emotional weight of being so far away from home.

And yet, here we are, not because it was easy, because we refused to give up.

The world we are stepping into is complex, competitive, and constantly changing. There will be moments when things don't go ahead as planned, and that's OK. We have already proven the most important thing. We know how to begin again. We know how to adapt. We know how to move forward, even without all the answers.

So wherever life takes us—into board rooms, startups, meetings, research labs, or paths we haven't yet imagined—let us carry forward not just what we learned, but who we became in the

process. Let us lead with clarity, act with integrity, and create impact that reaches beyond ourselves.

Because here's what I hope we never forget. We didn't just cross borders to earn this degree. We crossed *versions* of ourselves, and we're not going back.

Congratulations Sawyer Business School Class of 2026. The world isn't waiting for who we were. It's waiting for who we have become, and who we are still becoming. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]