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86th Commencement Student Speech

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86th Commencement
at Connecticut College

Remarks by Alex Sandman '04

Seniors… This is it. The day that was never supposed to come has somehow arrived. Even a few weeks ago, when we were all naked right over there, throwing donuts around Castle Court and acting like maniacs, I still felt that this day was just some phantom scribble on the calendar that would never actually come. First off I'd just like to say what a privilege it is to speak on behalf of such an amazing collection of people.

The Class of 2004 (and I should note that we are still the most selective class in the College's history) is overflowing with brilliant, talented, and caring individuals, who I am proud to know. I am so lucky to have had the chance to experience these four years with you all. I experimented using complex metaphors, haikus, and even econometric formulas to guide this speech. But, like you guys, I haven't really slept for three weeks, so I'll give it to you straight.

I experimented using complex metaphors, haikus, and econometric formulas to guide this speech. And for all of my fellow Fantasy Baseball Geeks hiding out there in the audience, I even played around with the idea of a Fantasy Graduation Draft, where you could do really cool things like trade potential lawyers for doctors, but THANKFULLY somewhere in the midst of entertaining myself with the prospect of this, I realized how dumb it was. And when it all came down to it, like you guys, I haven't really slept for three weeks, so I'll give it to you straight.

Now, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank those who made this radical experience possible…

Parents…. What can I say? If it wasn't for that magical evening some 22 years ago, we wouldn't be here. During my teens, when I was a plump little whiny know it all and nothing short of a complete punk, my Dad used to always tell me that someday I would realize that he was right and that I didn't know everything. Well, Dad, this is your day. This morning when I woke up and realized that I was supposed to deliver an inspiring and memorable message to 5 thousand people, I figured it out. I don't know anything! So I admit it Dad, congratulations. Thank you Moms and Dads, Brothers and Sisters, Grandparents and Pets for loving us and supporting us through everything.

The faculty… you have shown us what it takes to succeed through your energetic approach to even the most minute details of the academic world. Memories of long nights in the library slaving over 25 pagers don't yield the fondest images of you, but your passion towards teaching pushed us to do our best work, and your willingness to give extra help and teach outside of the classroom has been outstanding, and for all that we kind of like you.

The staff… so underappreciated. But please know how vital you are to this college. Physical Plant, you are unbelievable. You are asked to do so much but you are always able to find a way. Please know that although we constantly call in and complain about this and that, we understand your situation and we applaud your dedication and diligent work towards making this place run smoothly.

We have encountered adversity during our tenure here. September 11th shocked the world. We were confused, angry, and terrified of what would come next. But we, like our country as a whole, responded appropriately and respectfully, and continued on with a renewed pursuit of greater knowledge that would better allow us to understand the world. We have experienced cowardly acts of racism, and likewise, responded aggressively as a community. Harder times like these

tested our wills, and through them we learned the importance of togetherness, and the strength that is fostered in enthusiastic collaboration.

And let us not forget the good memories…That first warm day in the spring when you skip class and lie out on the green with your friends, all feeling a little guilty but too overtaken by the beauty of the day to think about your responsibilities… Remember how excited we were for our first TNE? “Hey guys lets go to THE Cro, I think there’s a huge dance!” Getting your first miscellaneous bill from the Office of the Controller… Sorry, I just have to ask, does anyone know who or what the controller is? What do they control? I don’t get it. Is it like the guy at the end of The Wizard of Oz with that control pad thing… I don’t know…

ANYWAYS… BACK TO FOND MEMORIES… Getting locked out in a towel when you are late for class was always fun…. And getting sexiled… Talking to your roommates across the room on Instant Messenger instead of speaking to them directly... And meeting the people that eventually became your best friends.

As time passed we became comfortable at Conn, and it didn’t really feel awkward anymore more to call this place home. We make lots of new homes over the course of our lives. We will always consider the house that we grew up in to be home. And 4 years ago we made Conn one of our homes. One of the most beautiful college campuses in the country, with beaches five minutes away, and the friendliest staff you will find anywhere, Connecticut College will always be a part of us. Take the spirit of this home with you wherever you go. This is when I am supposed to tell you to give lots of money. And I’m not gonna gloss it over or anything, so just give money so the college can continue to do great things... Like get those black bowls back in Harris, and have NESN on our TVs so the campus will be able to watch the Red Sox beat the Yankees and win the American League East.

As we, the graduating Class of 2004 sit here watching as the end of our college careers fades into the twilight, we wonder what the heck are we going to do now. Where will life take us next? We all know that question: “so, what are you doing next year?” The answer has gone from a comfortable “oh well I am still kinda working things out” to a terrified yet threatening “I DON’T KNOW JUST STOP ASKING ME.” Our individual answers to that question are now our realities. But you know what, regardless if you know exactly what you are doing from here or not, tomorrow morning when we wake up we all begin the ultimate adventure together, and I am confident that our experiences here over the past 4 years, good and bad alike, have prepared us to succeed in whatever we do next. Be good people, be there for your friends, do what you love, and life can only get better from here.

Good luck to you all. Thank you.