

College of Arts and Letters

Dean David Gudelunas—

Congratulations to everyone from the College of Arts and Letters receiving a degree today. I am incredibly proud of your accomplishments and I am equally proud of your perseverance. You don't need me to tell you that this is an unusual time, and this is an unusual way to mark a significant milestone like commencement. I wish I could tell you exactly what's coming next, but I can't. What I do know is that what you've done the past four years has made you uniquely prepared for this uncertain future. It may seem in this moment like the creating music, poetry, meaning, movements, art, ideas or campaigns is a type of luxury. Of course, creativity, critical thinking and effective communication are not something we can do without. Now more than ever your studies in the arts and humanities have prepared you for this moment. I believe that our graduates from the College of Arts and Letters who can think and express creativity will find not only success but happiness. To think about what hasn't existed already, about a world we have never experienced, about a commencement being held online, you need to be able to dream. You also need to be able to communicate those dreams, and you need to be an artist in the broadest most magical sense of the word.

During a period of history where history itself seems to move so fast and be so fleeting, where we can't remember what a politician or celebrity Tweeted yesterday or what tomorrow will bring, the fact that you took the time in your studies at the University of Tampa to pause, to think, to be in communion with your peers and your faculty mentors, to create something with permanence and, perhaps most importantly to bring some meaning to a culture that often times feels awash in meaninglessness is truly an accomplishment. You will forget a meme tomorrow but a great poem, a meaningful conversation you had with your professor in office hours or on Zoom, or your time on stage at the Falk is something that you can never forget. This is the stuff that matters.

On behalf of the faculty and staff in the College of Arts and Letters, congratulations. Go out there and make meaning, make a difference, make someone feel. Now more than ever, we need your creativity, your passion, your commitment.